MARVEL MASTERWORKS
THE MIGHTY THOR
VOLUME 20

THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 303-314
& ANNUAL No. 9
MARK GRUENWALD, RALPH MACCHIO,
DOUG MOENCH & KEITH POLLARD

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PRESENTS

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COLLECTING

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& ANNUAL No. 9

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS
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NOS. 303-314 & ANNUAL NO. 9

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS
CONTENTS

Introduction by Ralph Macchio . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #303, January 1981
"The Miracle of Storms" . . . . . .
"The Legendary Gods of Asgard " . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #304, February 1981
"Reckless!" . . . . . .
"Love's Labors Lost" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #305, March 1981
"Hark, the Herald Angel Lives!" . . . . . .
"The Sorceress and the Sacrifice!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #306, April 1981
"Fury of the Firelord!" . . . . . .
"…Till Death Do Us Part!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #307, May 1981
"Wings in the Night!" . . . . . .
"The Chains That Bind!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #308, June 1981
"The Snow Giant" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #309, July 1981
"Beware the Bombardiers!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #310, August 1981
"The Maelstrom to Mephisto" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #311, September 1981
"Grief More Than a God May Bear" . . . . . .
"A Call to Arms!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #312, October 1981
"The Judgment of Tyr" . . . . . .
"Baptism of Fire!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #313, November 1981
"Serpent from the Heavens" . . . . . .
"Last Flight of the Valkyries!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor #314, December 1981
"Acts of Destruction" . . . . . .
"Judgement--and Lament!" . . . . . .

The Mighty Thor Annual #9, 1981
"The Great Game!" . . . . . .

INTRODUCTION
BY RALPH MACCHIO

When you think about our awe-inspiring Thunder God the word "mythological" has to come to mind. So many of the unforgettable epics featuring him have occurred in far-off Norse realms such as Asgard, Skornheim, Niffleheim, etc. There have been whole-scale wars with trolls, Frost Giants and dragons that have no equal in comicdom. And then there's the saga to end them all: Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods!

When I was a *Thor* reader, I was totally captivated by these tales of gods and sorcerers and immortal warriors. I devoured the "Tales of Asgard" feature in the back of the comic. Later, I was incredibly fortunate to have (along with Mark Gruenwald) assisted Roy Thomas in the latter part of his game-changing run on the title. It all culminated in the double-sized issue #300, which was beautifully reproduced in the previous *Marvel Masterworks: The Mighty Thor* volume. Mark and I then did a coda to put it all to bed in the also-reprinted #301.

At Editor Jim Salicrup's request, the Gru and I stayed on the book, although we both felt we had accomplished all that we'd set out to do in #300 and #301. Frankly, we were kind of epic'd out. So, we sat down for a long story conference and seriously thought about where we wanted to go with *Thor*. What occurred to us was that during the long *Ring of the Nibelung*/Celestials Saga storyline, we had (unavoidably) neglected the human identity of our Asgardian Ace, Dr. Donald Blake. So, we made the very conscious decision to center the next series of issues around Blake, his life and supporting cast, small though it was. And that, True Believer, is where this vast volume picks up. It was time to look Earthward, Avenger, and see what was shakin' in the Big Apple. We approached Editor Salicrup with our idea and he was onboard, offering his own invaluable insights. So, with the wind at our backs and a new direction, Mark and I were off and running!

However, to give us a much-needed break, Jim commissioned #302 to be written by Doug Moench and penciled by Rick Leonardi. Doug was a highly accomplished, quite prolific Marvel scrivener whose work on *Master of Kung Fu* and *Moon Knight* were high water marks in a stellar career. In "The Miracle of Storms" he tells the sensitive story of a priest losing his faith and the tragic consequences that ensue. This is the tale of a man who sees declining enrollment in the church and how little impact his sermons seem to be making on parishioners' lives. He wonders if it isn't just time to pack it all in. The priest's interaction with both Don Blake and his Asgardian alter ego are finely scripted with much tender soul-searching. Penciler Leonardi moves the events smoothly along visually, though he's new to the Thunder God's exploits. Although Moench wrote this issue in 1981, the religious topics he touches upon regarding the Catholic Church are just as relevant today. You'll be amazed at the contemporary feel of the story. And, you'll even be treated to a gorgeous gallery of Asgard's finest by Mark. G. and regular *Thor* penciler, Keith Pollard. It's the kind of bonus that just hits your sweet spot!

Gruenwald and I returned with #304 and in keeping with our Midgard first policy, brought in one of our beloved Thor baddies—the Wrecker and his best buddies the Wrecking Crew! I've always gravitated toward the Wrecker since Stan Lee and Jack Kirby introduced him in the mid-1960s. I just love those thug-level villains such as the Wrecker, Absorbing Man and Sandman, who somehow gain staggering super-powers, yet keep their goals simple and direct: rob the bank and make off with the loot!

Thor has an enchanted hammer and the Wrecker has an enchanted crowbar. When they clash, you know buildings will topple and sidewalks will crumble. The Gru and I also enjoyed the starkly different personalities of each of the Wrecking Crew, from the intellectual Thunderball to the "dese" and "dose" dialogue of Piledriver. We have the crew chowing down at McDonald's (guess they couldn't get reservations at the Four Seasons) because the Wrecker thinks better on a full stomach. I think it was Mark who came up with the idea of having the main action take place inside one of the landmarks of New York's Upper West Side, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Mark was an Upper West Side resident and familiar with the neighborhood. It was an inspired choice of locale for this quartet of quarrelsome felons to trash and we had a ball writing it! One of the great cultural centers of the city under siege and only the Son of Odin could stop it so the next performance of *Madame Butterfly* could commence at the Opera House. It wasn't all fun and games, though, as there was a tragic death to be dealt with that certainly sobered the proceedings up. We added that to the plotline because when you have such carnage on the city's streets, there are bound to be casualties.

I want to note that we hadn't totally abandoned the mythological realms because we reinstated the five-page "Tales of Asgard" feature that had been absent for a bit. We had a storyline in progress featuring a love triangle between Balder the Brave, Karnilla Queen of the Norns and Balder's true love, Nanna. We were actually picking up on events that go back to Roy Thomas' tenure on the *Thor* title. There had been a major change in the character of Balder, and we wanted to delve into that. Our penciler on both the main feature and backup, Keith Pollard, was equally at home illustrating the destructive doings of the Wrecking Crew as he was displaying the emotional turmoil of a god. We were so fortunate of have a penciler of Keith's caliber in our corner. Whenever we wrote up our plot for a particular issue, we knew we'd always be getting back far more than we asked. No matter how intricate or difficult a sequence we presented to Clobberin' Keith, he was always equal to the task. It was a pleasure working with the man.

The following stories, #305 and #306, are really a two-parter. While Mark and I kept our promise to keep the action earthbound, we brought in, as Thor's able antagonists, two former heralds of the planet eater Galactus. While the Big G's most famous herald is the Silver Surfer of legend, he's had several others in his countless eons of existence. Air-Walker and Firelord are the two we featured. Stan Lee and John Buscema introduced Air-Walker very late in his run on *Fantastic Four*, when the character referred to himself as Gabriel. And boy, could he blow a mean horn! Firelord came along somewhat later, during Gerry Conway's time on *The Mighty Thor*, in issue #225.

Mark and I really dug both characters and wanted to find a way to draw them together in a totally unexpected fashion. We decided to tie them both in with the Nova Corps. It was a story in which all the pieces just fell into place the more we talked about it. And we were able to get our quotient of slam bang Marvel action in there, as well. Keith Pollard, of course, did his usual superlative job on the penciling. From our end, it was a highly satisfying endeavor; a couple of issues that I look upon with much pride. We also were able to conclude the Balder segment of "Tales of Asgard" with #306 in an emotionally shattering climax. I really hope you believers enjoy both #305 and #306. I'm so pleased they've found their way into a high-quality *Marvel Masterworks*.

Issue #307 was as much about Dr. Don Blake as it was his hammer-wielding alter ego. It was also the final issue of Mark and my tenure on the title's main feature. Although Keith Pollard was not able to pencil the issue, Alan Kupperberg did a fine job as a fill-in artist. We wanted to leave the book on a high note, and "Wings in the Night!" gave us that chance. But we weren't entirely done with the scion of Asgard—our "Tales of Asgard" feature was later resumed in #311. In the meantime, we happily turned over the scripting reins to Doug Moench. Mark and I had accomplished a great deal with Thor, Don Blake and the amazing Asgardian cast, and it was time to depart.

Doug began his heralded run with a single-issue story in #308 that seemed to anticipate the "Cask of Ancient Winters" saga brought to life many years later by wondrous Walt Simonson. Rereading the issue, I was struck by Loki's use of an enchanted globe to bring unprecedented amounts of snowfall to Earth. Keith Pollard was back on the penciling end of things, giving us a doozy of battle between Thor and a jaw-dropping Snow Giant formerly imprisoned by all-mighty Odin. Doug was able to give the reader a sense of what out of control weather could do to our fragile little world. Shades of climate change more than 35 years ago. And the double-page spread of Loki holding the globe that opens the issue is worth the price of admission. This was a fine debut issue for Doug, although he and Keith were spelled next issue for a truly offbeat tale by Bill Mantlo and the returning Rick Leonardi.

The Moench/Pollard pairing came back in fabulous style in #310 for a classic confrontation between Thor and the Lord of the Underworld, the maleficent Mephisto! Although there is a titanic struggle later in the issue in Mephisto's fire and brimstone domain, Moench keeps the main motivating factor of the story grounded on Earth. Here, his satanic majesty is deeply concerned that Thor's constant intervention in the affairs of mankind will tip the balance away from Mephisto's evil side of the equation. If humanity's collective spirit should be exalted, then there will be far fewer souls populating the netherworld. And so, he decides to take a direct hand in our affairs leading, naturally, to a climactic confrontation with our blond-haired hero. It's a compellingly told fable of good versus evil on a huge scale, with the outcome often in doubt. The stunning illustrations of the Big M.'s dark and deadly domain by Keith made us wonder if he hadn't made a personal trip down below, camera in hand.

The next entry, #311, is a tale that could have been written last week rather than in 1981. "Crisis in the Inner City" deals starkly with the shooting of a young Black man by the police and the dire consequences for everyone concerned. This piece could be ripped from today's headlines as our country has been focused in recent months on racial injustice in light of the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police. Doug effectively portrays the often-volatile relationship between the authorities and the Black community. I was incredibly impressed with the manner in which Doug makes an unlikely player in these proceedings, a Norse Thunder God, central to the story's outcome. His scripting is quite evenhanded, giving weight to both sides. Deeply incorporating a mythical deity into an urban tale rife with racial tension took consummate skill. Yet, Doug made it all appear natural. My hat's doffed to Doug and Keith for this truly exceptional gem.

We move back to Asgard after that cautionary tale for a titanic two-parter, #312 and #313, that feature our Asgardian prince in immortal combat with the Norse God of War, Tyr. In addition to the expected pyrotechnics, Doug makes this a superb character study of both Tyr and Thor's lady love, the stunning Sif. When the God of Mischief, Loki, gets into the mix, it bodes ill for the stressed Thunder God. And it's not a good time for Dr. Don Blake as he receives some terrible news about the medical clinic in which Blake now toils. Kudos to Doug for not neglecting the mortal half of the Thor/Blake dynamic. Mr. Moench makes the most of the evolving triangle between himself, Tyr and Sif. In Doug's hands, Tyr becomes a flesh-and-blood figure with real wants and desires. Nicely done.

Mark Gruenwald and I were also represented in the revived "Tales of Asgard," in which Odin has to contend with the annexation of Valhalla, where the slain Norse warriors spend eternity in joyful combat, into the frigid realm of the Goddess of Death, Hela, called Niffelheim. We'd always found this frightful female a fascinating goddess, so the Gru and I drew on incidents involving her that went as far back as *Thor* #190. In this three-part extravaganza, we delve into feelings that were awakened in Hela when she'd seen how Sif was willing to sacrifice her life in place of Thor's. It was a heartrending scene by Stan Lee and John Buscema that had stayed with us through the years. We knew there was story material to mine there, so we went to work. We plotted the five-page segments meticulously, so the final part had the appropriate room to linger on Hela's crucial interaction with Odin. Pollard's visuals were flawless and allowed Mark and I to wring every bit of emotional energy from the confrontation. We sweated over this one and it paid off in spades!

This volume's Moench/Pollard collaboration is issue #314, in which Doug takes on several of the cosmic creations of Jim Starlin. In the 1970s, Starlin came onto the comics scene with an entire pantheon of his own imagining. One of those is a fella named Thanos, the Mad Titan. You may have heard of him. In this story, Moench focused on an Earthman killed by Thanos, Art Douglas, and his daughter, Heather Douglas, otherwise known as Drax the Destroyer and Moondragon. These two prominent members of the Starlin mythology were handled with aplomb by daring Doug. Their motivations are poignant and powerful. Moondragon's deep feelings toward her father, Drax, are exposed with such sensitivity that this tale will stay with you long after you've finished it. Both characters have become well embedded in the larger Marvel tapestry in part because of works such as this issue.

The final entry in this magnificent *Marvel Masterworks* was written by *X-Men* scribe supreme, Chris Claremont, and penciled by *Iron Man* illustrator, Luke McDonnell. The *Annual* features omnipotent Odin engaged in a cosmic chess match with no less than the ruler of the Dark Dimension—the Dread Dormammu! And, depending on who wins, either Order or Chaos will reign in the world at large. Thor's desperate struggle to prevail in pitched battle with the Dread One's sister, Umar, is given additional urgency due to the incredibly high stakes. This double-sized spectacular is a fitting issue to end this classic collection. In my view, it's exactly what a *Thor Annual* should be and well worth your kind attention. After all, a tale such as that only comes around once a year!

I believe it was a good decision to begin to focus on the often neglected life of Donald Blake. It was a stoke of genius by Stan and Jack to have made the mortal alter ego of a brash, sometimes arrogant Thunder God, that of a lamed physician; a healer as opposed to a warrior. One carries a walking stick or cane, the other brandishes a hammer endowed with the power to shatter a planet! Odin originally created the Thor/Blake dichotomy as a check on his son's seemingly limitless ego. Thor learned humility though his connection to Blake. And that isn't a lesson easily gleaned by either headstrong immortal or man. But isn't that what it's all about: self knowledge.

Now let's join our unusually thoughtful Thunderer as he gazes out over the city of New York, which, in some ways, is as much a home to him as faraway Asgard. It isn't often we're privy to the solitary musing of a Norse deity. But we've got the chance now. Let's listen…

Enjoy,

Ralph Macchio

2020

Ralph Macchio's tenure as a Marvel Comics editor is second only to Stan Lee. Throughout his distinguished career he has guided the creation of iconic series including, Frank Miller's Daredevil, *Walter Simonson's* Thor, *the launch of the Ultimate Universe and adaptations of Stephen King's* Dark Tower *and* The Stand. *He has also written numerous titles, including* Marvel Two-In-One *and* Marvel Fanfare, *and trained generations of editors, including future editors-in-chief.*

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

WHATEVER GODS THERE BE...!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

THE MIRACLE OF STORMS

AND SO ONCE AGAIN I RETURN TO MIDGARD-- THAT TROUBLED REALM OF TURMOIL CALLED EARTH BY ITS MORTAL DENIZENS...

'TIS A STRANGE PLACE, POSSESSED OF A MOOD AND REALITY ALL ITS OWN-- AND ITS STRANGENESS IS PERHAPS BEST EXPRESSED HERE IN THIS CITY OF NEW YORK... SO VERY FAR FROM THE SHINING SPIRES OF ASGARD, MY HOMELAND!

AND YET, FOR ALL ITS MYRIAD DIFFERENCES... IT IS NO LESS FABULOUS, IN ITS OWN WAYS AND MEANS, THAN VAUNTED ASGARD ITSELF!

AND I BEGIN TO WONDER... HAVE I DWELT TOO MUCH OF LATE AMONG THE SHINING SPIRES, WITH NO COMPANIONSHIP SAVE THAT OF OTHER GODS AND DEMIGODS?

DOUG MOENCH — WRITER
RICK LEONARDI & CHIC STONE — ARTISTS
JOE ROSEN — LETTERER
GEORGE ROUSSOS — COLORIST
JIM SALICRUP — EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER — EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TRUE, I AM A GOD MYSELF, BUT I BE ALSO PART HUMAN...

AND, I THINK, I'D DO WELL NOT TO FORGET THE KNOWLEDGE!

FOR, WITHOUT THE FAITH OF MORTALS--

--A GOD IS NOTHING!

AND IN THESE DARK DAYS UPON MIDGARD, IT SEEMS--

--FAITH ITSELF HANGS IN DIRE JEOPARDY!

THEN, DRAWN BY THE MYSTIC MIGHT OF MJOLNIR, HIS URU HAMMER, THOR CLEAVES THE HEAVY NIGHT SKIES...

...THERE TO VIEW THE URBAN SPRAWL OF MANHATTAN AS ONLY A GOD CAN, APPRECIATING THE DARK DENSITY OF THE CITY NOT ONLY FOR WHAT IT IS, BUT WHAT IT **CAN BE**...

...SOMETIMES GOOD, SOMETIMES BAD, OCCASIONALLY INDIFFERENT...

...BUT ALWAYS HOST TO A CONSTANT STORM OF HUMANITY, EVER STRUGGLING AND STRIVING, EVER VITAL...

...AND OFTEN THE SOURCE OF STORMS OF A DIFFERENT SORT...

STORMS, FOR EXAMPLE... OF VIOLENCE.

AN INNOCENT IN THE SHADOWS OF YON STREET BELOW--BESIEGED BY TWO ATTACKERS!

THEN THE TIME HAS COME, AS I KNEW IT WOULD, WHEN THOR--GOD OF THUNDER AND STORMS--MUST DESCEND IN FURY, UPON THE AFFAIRS OF MORTALS!

HALT!
WH-WHAT THE--?!!
HOLY CRIPES! IT'S *THOR*--!! WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!!
NO! PLEASE-- D-DON'T HIT ME!
THOU WOULD PLEAD FOR MERCY-- AFTER DEALING NOTHING BUT PAIN?
BEGONE, SCOUNDREL!
JOIN THE FLIGHT OF THY COMPANION!
THEN, KNEELING OVER THE VICTIM...
BY ODIN'S EYE! THE OBJECT OF THEIR ATTACK--!
'TIS A... PRIEST!
AND HIS INJURIES APPEAR GRIEVOUS...
IF SO, THERE BE NO TIME FOR AN AMBULANCE...
THE SHELTER AND COMFORT OF HIS OWN CHURCH WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE!
THERE! THE LIGHT SHINES MOST BRIGHTLY UPON THE ALTAR!
HERE, I WILL INSPECT THE WOUND.
ALREADY I CAN FEEL THE FRAGMENT OF A KNIFE-BLADE EMBEDDED IN HIS ARM...
IF IT MOVES ANY CLOSER TO THE MAJOR ARTERY--
THEN THE BLADE MUST BE REMOVED...
...THE BLEEDING HALTED!

BUT IF EVEN MIGHTY THOR IS POWERLESS AGAINST SUCH A THREAT--

--THERE MAY BE ANOTHER-- A MORTAL-- WHOSE DEVICES WILL PROVE EQUAL TO THE TASK!

BOOM

IT...IT'S DONE, I'M DR. DONALD BLAKE ONCE AGAIN!

NOW... IF I HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SAVING THE MAN, I'LL NEED EQUIPMENT-- MAKESHIFT TO BE SURE...

...SINCE A CHURCH IS DESIGNED TO HEAL THE SPIRIT, BUT HARDLY THE FLESH.

PERHAPS BEHIND THE ALTAR, WHERE THE COMMUNION SUPPLIES ARE KEPT...

YES,--FRESH TOWELS, A STOVE TO BOIL SOME WATER-- AND EVEN A FIRST-AID KIT OVER THERE... BUT THREAD WILL HAVE TO DO FOR THE SUTURES.

IT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASY WITHOUT THE PROPER SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS...

...BUT THERE'S NO TIME TO EVEN *THINK* ABOUT FAILURE!

ONE SLIP AND...

NO--THE FRAGMENT'S OUT-- AND THE ARTERY'S STILL INTACT!

BUT HE'S STEADILY LOSING BLOOD FROM MINOR VESSELS.

GOT TO STEM THE FLOW BEFORE--

OHHH...

HE'S REVIVING--!

WH-WHO...? A...A MIRACLE...?

NO...JUST A NORMAL MAN... A DOCTOR...

EASY--YOU'RE WEAK FROM LOSS OF BLOOD...

HE'S DELIRIOUS--PASSING OUT AGAIN!

INTO A STORM OF DARKNESS.

THE VAULTED CHURCH EMBRACES AN HOUR OF SERENE SILENCE...THEN--

FEELING BETTER, FATHER? I FOUND SOME SOUP IN YOUR QUARTERS BEHIND THE ALTAR.

TRY TO GET IT DOWN--YOU'LL NEED PLENTY OF FLUIDS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

THANK YOU, BUT...HOW DID I GET--

TO THE PEW? YOU MUST HAVE MOVED YOURSELF. YOU WERE STILL LYING ON THE ALTAR WHEN I LEFT TO GET THE SOUP.

DO YOU WANT TO LIE DOWN AGAIN? ACTUALLY, IT MIGHT BE A GOOD--

NO, I'M FEELING BETTER... STILL A BIT DIZZY, THOUGH...PERHAPS I SHOULD GO TO MY QUARTERS...

THINK YOU CAN WALK IF I HELP YOU? THE NAME'S DONALD BLAKE.

EASY NOW... TAKE IT NICE AND SLOW...

AFTER THE CLOSE BRUSH YOU'VE JUST HAD, THERE'S NO NEED TO RUSH INTO *ANYTHING*...

IS THERE A PHONE IN YOUR OFFICE? WE'D BETTER CALL THE POLICE NOW...

IT...WOULDN'T DO ANY GOOD.

WHAT? WHY NOT?

THE POLICE REQUIRE EVIDENCE PROVING THAT A CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED BY THEM. SO THEY'RE SAFE--THEY'LL NEVER STOP!

WHO? THE MUGGERS--?

THEY WEREN'T MUGGERS, DR. BLAKE. THEY WERE PAID KILLERS--HIRED BY SO-CALLED "BUSINESSMEN" WHO HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DRIVE ME OUT OF THIS "PROPERTY" FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS. THEY WANT TO DEMOLISH THE CHURCH--

--AND "DEVELOP THE PROPERTY IN TRUE ACCORDANCE WITH ITS VALUE!"

AND YOU THINK THEY'D ACTUALLY GO TO SUCH LENGTHS TO DRIVE YOU OUT?

UNTIL TONIGHT, NO--EVEN THOUGH ONE OF MY PARISHIONERS CLAIMS THEY'RE BACKED BY ORGANIZED CRIME. IN THE PAST THEY'VE TRIED OTHER MEANS--

--HARASSMENT, PETTY VANDALISM, OBSCENE GRAFFITI, PAINT BOTTLES SMASHED ON THE WALLS, THREATENING PHONE CALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...AND NOW THIS!

MAYBE IT'S TIME THE CHURCH SIMPLY SOLD OUT.

BUT WHY--? AFTER FIVE YEARS, WHY GIVE UP NOW, FATHER? IF IT'S YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT, THE POLICE--

NO, NOT THAT--BUT DECLINING ATTENDANCE, FOR ONE THING, FAMILIES HAVE BEEN FLEEING THE CITY FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS--AND THOSE WHO STILL ATTEND CAN HARDLY AFFORD WHAT THE OFFERTORY PLATE ONCE COLLECTED.

WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN A POOR CHURCH. MAYBE NOW IT'S TIME TO DIE.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU?

A STORM OF DOUBT CROSSES THE PRIEST'S FACE AS HE REPLIES...

ME? PERHAPS IT'S TIME I...RETIRED. THE FIRE HAS LEFT ME--THE BURNING CONVICTION--GOD HELP ME, BUT IT'S JUST NOT THERE ANY MORE!

PERHAPS I LOST FAITH YEARS AGO... AND I'M ONLY NOW REALIZING IT. ONE THING IS CERTAIN--I'M NO LONGER STRONG ENOUGH TO RUN THIS CHURCH!

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU'RE LOSING YOUR FAITH?

BECAUSE I SEE NOTHING BUT EVIL OR APATHY ALL AROUND ME IN THIS CITY. I NEED PROOF OF SOMETHING GOOD, SOMETHING HIGHER AND NOBLER--AND ONCE ONE NEEDS PROOF... FAITH IS DEAD!

WHAT KIND OF PROOF?

OH, NOT A MIRACLE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING...

I'M NOT *THAT* NAIVE. JUST A RAY OF HOPE, I GUESS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN I REVIVED ON THE ALTAR-- IN DELIRIUM, THINKING I'D ALREADY DIED-- AND I SAW THE MADONNA STANDING OVER ME, I... I...

...WELL, FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT IT WAS THE DIVINE HAND OF GOD... BUT IT WAS ONLY YOU, THE HEALING HAND OF MORTAL MAN.

PERHAPS I *AM* A GOD.

WHAT--?!

AN *INSTRUMENT* OF GOD. ARE WE NOT ALL TOUCHED WITH DIVINITY?

YES, BUT--

WHO *ARE* THESE MEN WHO WANT YOUR CHURCH, FATHER?

A GROUP CALLED DEVELOPMENT RESEARCHERS, INC. BUT AS I SAID, A PARISHIONER CLAIMS IT'S A FRONT FOR SOME MOB FIGURE. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE NAME...

WHAT ABOUT THE PARISHIONER'S NAME?

THAT'S PRIVILEGED INFORMATION. I CAN'T--

PRESUMABLY, THIS PARISHIONER WANTS TO HELP THE CHURCH.

I WANT TO HELP YOU TOO. TOGETHER, WE MAY BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING.

VERY WELL... IT WAS NOT A CONFESSION.

HIS NAME IS EDWARD CZERNIAK.

THE NEXT DAY...

WITH THE ANTIBIOTICS I GAVE HIM, THE PRIEST'S PHYSICAL WOUND SHOULD HEAL...

TRUSTPHONE

BUT IT'S THE DEEPER SPIRITUAL WOUND THAT CONCERNS ME NOW!

C-Z-E-R-N-I-A-K, EDWARD, HERE IT IS!

YEAH, THIS IS ED CZERNIAK, WHAT? YEAH, SURE...

ANY FRIEND OF FATHER COZA'S IS A FRIEND O' MINE...

YEAH, IT'S ANGELO SIMONI BEHIND THE SCAM...SURE, I'M SURE... HOW DO I KNOW? I JUST KNOW, THAT'S ALL.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, SO I PLAY THE PONIES ONCE IN A WHILE, MAYBE A LITTLE NUMBERS ACTION...

...AND I'M FRIENDLY WITH ONE OF SIMONI'S BOYS, THAT'S ALL!

YEAH, SIMONI'S GOT A BIG PLACE OUT ON--

"--LONG ISLAND."

WHAT--? WHO YOU TRYIN' TO KID ABOUT THIS THOR BULL? YOU MUCKED IT UP AND THAT'S THAT--NO EXCUSES!

YOU HEARD ME--I'M GIVIN' YOU ONE LAST CHANCE TONIGHT!

WE'VE RUN OUT OF TIME ON THIS DEAL! YOU KNOW WHAT YOU GOTTA DO--AND IF YOU BLOW IT THIS TIME, YOUR CANS ARE IN A CONCRETE SLING! *GET ON IT!*

AWRIGHT, NOW *YOU* MUGS ARE GOIN' TO ATLANTIC CITY TO PUSH THROUGH THE CASINO DEAL, AND NOW WE'RE GONNA BE NEEDIN' SOME FAST CASH TO DEVELOP THE NEW PROPERTY--

--DON'T BLOW IT!

ONCE WE GOT THAT STUPID PRIEST TAKEN CARE OF, WE WANNA MOVE FAST ON TURNIN' THAT CHURCH DUMP INTO AN OFFICE BUILDING WITH NICE FAT, JUICY RENTS!

NOW SHOVE OFF, AND DON'T COME BACK UNTIL--

CHOOM

WHAT THE--?! *LIGHTNING--!*

BUT THE SKY'S CLEAR TONIGHT! HOW COULD--

KRASH

THAT HAMMER--!

IT'S TURNIN' AROUND IN MID-AIR!

THEN SAL AND EDDIE WEREN'T LYIN'--!

THEY REALLY DID MEET UP WITH--

SAPT

OH, NO.

I AM *THOR*... GOD OF THUNDER.

AND THE ROOM BOILS WITH A STORM OF FEAR.

THE LIGHTNING FLARE FADES, AND IN THE RUMBLE OF ENSUING THUNDER ANGELO SIMONI FINDS HIS VOICE...

WASTE HIM!

KILL HIM!!

AND SO, A STORM OF VIOLENCE BEGINS...

BRAM

BRAM

WHAT'RE YA DOIN', FRANKIE?! IF BULLETS DIDN'T STOP HIM, HOW CAN A PUNCH--

IT CANNOT, MORTAL!

HE'S SWINGIN' HIS HAMMER FASTER-- IT'S LIKE A HURRICANE! WE'RE GONNA SLAM INTO THE WALL--!

THEY DO... THEN SLUMP TO THE FLOOR.

NOW, MORTALS, IF THY PETTY FURY HAS ABATED...MINE HAS JUST BEGUN TO SEETHE...

THE STORM OF WRATH...

HEAR ME, ANGELO SIMONI. THOU ART A BASE VILLAIN--

BUT THY VILLAINY NOW COMES TO AN END!

YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN ENDANGER THE CHURCH, NOR THREATEN FATHER COZA'S LIFE OR SAFETY!

S-SURE, SURE--ANYTHING YOU SAY! THEY CAN KEEP THE CHURCH! WE'LL NEVER GO NEAR IT AGAIN IF YOU ONLY JUST PROMISE NOT TO HURT M--

UH OH. I JUST REALIZED--!

WHAT?

SPEAK, VILLAIN-- *NOW!*

DON'T HIT ME--*PLEASE* DON'T HIT ME-- BUT IT... IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE! THE CHURCH--! I...I ALREADY SENT SOME GUYS TO--

"--FIREBOMB IT!"

AWRIGHT, LET'S MAKE THIS QUICK-- WE DUMP THE COCKTAILS DOWN THE HATCH AN' SPLIT WITHOUT LOOKIN' BACK!

RIGHT-- LET'S FIRE 'EM UP...

--BUT IF IT IS GOD'S WAY, MRS. SHEEHAN, THEN NEW LIFE MUST BE A SOURCE OF JOY, NOT VEXATION...

EVEN WHEN THERE'S NO WAY TO FEED THAT NEW LIFE, FATHER?

NO WAY TO CLOTHE OR CARE FOR IT--? TELL ME, FATHER-- HOW CAN THAT BE A SOURCE OF JOY?

I... WELL, I...

IT'S NO USE! I'M NO LONGER SURE I EVEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL ANYONE ABOUT--

KRASH

WHAT-- WHAT WAS THAT?!

STAY HERE, MRS. SHEEHAN!

THERE MAY BE DANGER OUT THERE-- I DON'T WANT YOU INVOLVED!

I'M GOING TO LOCK YOU INSIDE THE OFFICE-- YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE! USE MY PHONE TO CALL THE POLICE!

JUST STAY IN THERE, MRS. SHEEHAN-- NO MATTER WHAT YOU HEAR OUT-SIDE!

KLITCH

NOW... LORD GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO DEAL WITH THIS NEW TRIAL...

EXIT

...WHATEVER IT MAY PROVE TO--

NO! THE CHURCH IS ON FIRE--!

BURNING--!!

WITH HIS ONE GOOD ARM, FATHER COZA AWKWARDLY RIPS A TAPESTRY FROM THE WALL AND BEGINS BEATING AT THE SWIFTLY SPREADING FLAMES...

BUT THEN--

KRASH

WHOOM

ANOTHER ONE!

THE SECOND MOLOTOV COCKTAIL BLOSSOMS...

...AND THE INJURED PRIEST FINDS HIMSELF SURROUNDED BY A STORM OF HELLFIRE.

IT'S NO USE! THERE'S NO WAY I CAN BEAT OUT THE FLAMES!

GOD HELP ME-- BUT I'VE GOT TO FLEE THE CHURCH!

GOT TO ABANDON IT TO THE FIRE!

THE WHINE AND CRACKLE OF CONFLAGRATION BUILDS--

--DROWNING THE APPROACHING SOUND OF A CLEAN, PURE WIND...

COME ON-- BEFORE SOMEONE TURNS IN THE ALARM!

OR BEFORE WE RUN INTO THAT THOR GUY AGAIN!

THEY ARE NOT EVEN AWARE OF HIM...

ON THIS BUILDING! ROXXON OIL INC

SPAK

RAK

HUH--?!

...UNTIL IT IS FAR TOO LATE.

WAMP

BAMP

MRS. SHEEHAN--!

SHE'S LOCKED IN MY OFFICE--AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WITH THE KEY! SHE...SHE'LL BURN TO DEATH--AND I...

...I HAVEN'T THE COURAGE TO GO BACK AND TRY TO SAVE HER...!

THE PRIEST CRUMPLES TO HIS KNEES, **WEEPING** A DESPERATE PRAYER...

STRENGTH, DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN... PLEASE GIVE ME **STRENGTH!**

AND, ON A ROOFTOP...

HEAR ME, FATHER ODIN, LORD OF ASGARD AND HOLDER OF THE KEYS TO VALHALLA--!

'TIS THY SON CALLING-- THOR, THE GOD OF STORMS! I SUMMON FORTH THE THUNDER, AND THE LIGHTNING! SEND DOWN THE RAINS-- TO QUENCH YON FIRE!

AND THE STORM GATHERS...

LIGHTNING--! AND...AND RAIN!

...FALLING LIKE TEARS FROM HEAVEN.

SOME KIND OF... CELESTIAL VISION...!

A SIGN--! I ASKED FOR A SIGN--AND NOW IT'S BEEN GIVEN!

TRULY, A STORM OF INSPIRATION...

I **MUST** GO BACK INSIDE!

MUST SAVE MRS. SHEEHAN-- AND THE PROMISE OF LIFE SHE CARRIES!

KNOWING NOTHING OF THE TRAPPED WOMAN, THOR BELLOWS--

COME BACK, MORTAL! THE STORM MAY PUT OUT THE FIRE, BUT YOU CANNOT RISK YOUR LIFE UNTIL--

BUT FATHER COZA NEITHER HEARS NOR HEEDS THE CALL...

...AND SO, THE THUNDER GOD DESCENDS INTO THE MAELSTROM, FORCED TO PURSUE.

INSIDE...
MUST FIGHT MY WAY THROUGH THE CHURCH--
--REACH MY OFFICE IN THE BACK...
AND WHEN THOR ENTERS...
THE RAIN BEGINS TO DOUSE THE FIRE.
BUT THERE IS STILL GREAT DANGER-- AND THE PRIEST IS GONE!
MRS. SHEEHAN-- COME QUICKLY!
EXIT
THE HEAT, FATHER-- THE SMOKE-- I... I'M GETTING DIZZY... DON'T KNOW IF I CAN--
KRUMPH
THE SHOCK-- SHE'S SWOONING! GOT TO CATCH HER!
CARRY HER... EVEN THOUGH MY LEFT ARM FEELS LIKE IT'S BURNING... BLEEDING AGAIN!
YON WALL-- ABOUT TO TOPPLE!
HOLD FAST, MORTAL!
SKRAKT
BUT THEN--
THE CROSS-- FALLING-- AND THE WALL IS ABOUT TO FOLLOW!
FORGIVE ME, MRS. SHEEHAN...

...BUT MY ARM--! I...I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO GO ON...

AYE--BUT THOR HAS STRENGTH ENOUGH!

NOW, MORTAL--THE WALL IS BRACED--TAKE THE WOMAN AND GO!

THE PRIEST TURNS TO LOOK UPON THOR'S NOBLE VISAGE, THEIR EYES LOCK FOR A TIMELESS MOMENT...

...CONJURING A STORM OF CONFLICTING EMOTIONS...

YOU...YOU *ARE* A GOD...BUT THEN, IF YOU...AND NOT *HIM*...HAS MY FAITH BEEN RESTORED ONLY FOR ME TO FIND THAT IT HAS BEEN...MISPLACED?

THERE BE *MANY* GODS WORSHIPPED ON THIS EARTH, FATHER COZA, THROUGHOUT THIS UNIVERSE...

THEY ARE GIVEN TRUTH BY THE STRENGTH OF FAITH AND THUS, THROUGH BELIEF AND PRAYER, ALL ARE MADE TRUE...

ALL SPRING FROM THE SAME UNIVERSAL *HIGHER FORCE*. YOUR FAITH IS *NOT* MISPLACED.

GO--SAVE YOURSELF AND THE WOMAN!
YOU CAN!
YOU HAVE THE FAITH! YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH! GO! DO IT!
THEN, TAPPING SOME INNER RESERVE OF STRENGTH AND WILL, THE PRIEST IS ABLE TO DO IT...
AND NO ONE IS MORE AWED... THAN HE HIMSELF!
WITH THE PRIEST AND WOMAN SAFELY BEYOND DANGER--
--THOR LETS THE WALL COLLAPSE...
SHWUMP
...THEN STRIDES, UNSCATHED, FROM THE RUBBLE!
OUTSIDE, AS THE THUNDERSTORM DOUSES THE FIRE--
--A MAN WHO NEEDED COMFORT HIMSELF...NOW FINDS A WAY TO GIVE IT.
AND AROUND THE CORNER, AS SIRENS MOAN FROM THE NEAR DISTANCE...
'TIS TIME, ONCE AGAIN, TO USE MINE URU HAMMER TO ACHIEVE THE TRANSFORMATION FROM GOD TO MORTAL...
THUS, DR. DONALD BLAKE AND THE FIRE ENGINES ARRIVE TOGETHER...
HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND, FATHER COZA?
DR. BLAKE--! I...YES...I SAID I NEEDED A SIGN, SOME SMALL RAY OF HOPE. THOUGH UNWORTHY, I HAVE RECEIVED IT. GOD HAS SENT ME A SIGN... A GLORIOUS SIGN...
...AND IT HAS GIVEN ME THE STRENGTH TO GO ON. SOMEHOW, SOME WAY, THE CHURCH WILL BE REBUILT...AND WILL GO ON!

EPILOGUE: THE NEXT DAY'S SUN IS MORE THAN UPLIFTING...

ALL THESE VOLUNTEERS PITCHING IN TO HELP CLEAN UP... PERHAPS I UNDERESTIMATED THE WORTH OF THE CHURCH IN THEIR LIVES. BUT IF SO, THEY CERTAINLY HAVE NOT...

STILL, NO MATTER HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS WE HAVE--

--IT WILL TAKE MONEY TO REBUILD...AND TO GET THE NECESSARY MONEY, IT WILL TAKE A MIRACLE...

FATHER COZA...?

YES? YOU ARE...?

I...UH...I'M A-ANGELO SIMONI, FATHER...

THE MOBSTER KNEELS, KISSES THE PRIEST'S HAND...

I...I JUST WANTED TO...

...TO MAKE A DONATION TO THE CHURCH, FATHER... AND PLEASE... FORGIVE ME. I HAVE... SINNED.

AND ALL THE STORMS, ALL OF THEM-- OF FEAR AND HATE AND GREED AND WRATH-- ALL OF THEM ABATE AS ONE...

BUT...HOW? WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED SUCH A CHANGE IN A MAN LIKE THAT?

WAIT-- UP THERE--!

HIM AGAIN! THE SIGN, IT SEEMS, COULDN'T BE ANY CLEARER...

AND TOMORROW THE SUN WILL SHINE BRIGHT, CLEAR, AND STRONG-- A BEACON OF LIGHT THAT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE CLOUDED BY THE DARKNESS OF STORMS...

END

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

THE LEGENDARY GODS OF ASGARD

THOR THE GOD OF THUNDER AND WIELDER OF THE INVINCIBLE URU HAMMER--MJOLNIR... WHICH ENABLES HIM TO SUMMON THE STORM, SOAR THROUGH THE HEAVENS, AND SMITE HIS ACCURSED FOES! BLOODSON OF ODIN AND THE EARTH-GODDESS CALLED JORD, THE MIGHTY THOR IS BOTH PRINCE OF ASGARD AND DEFENDER OF EARTH!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #83.

SIF-- GODDESS OF THE HARVEST AND THE HUNT... SISTER OF HEIMDALL, THE GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE... AND BELOVED OF THE THUNDER GOD HIMSELF!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY IN MYSTERY #102.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
MARK GRUENWALD
scribe
KEITH POLLARD
artist
JOHN COSTANZA. G.ROUSSOS
letters colors
HAVE JOINED FORCES TO PRODUCE A PANTHEON OF POWER-PACKED PIN-UPS TO PULVERIZE YOUR PUPILS AND TO JUST PLAIN PLEASE YOU! 'NUFFETH SAID!

pollard

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

THE LEGENDARY GODS OF ASGARD

VOLLA-- THE AGED GODDESS OF PROPHECY! A DWELLER IN THE LAND OF SHADES, SHE IS PERHAPS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE RACE OF NORNS THAT ODIN TRUSTS.

FIRST APPEARANCE: THOR #127.

HELA-- GODDESS OF THE DEAD AND RULER OF THE SHADOW-REALM OF *NIFFLEHEIM*. NOT CONTENT TO REIGN OVER THE SHADES OF THE DISHONORED, HELA LUSTS TO USURP VALHALLA, ODIN'S HALL OF HEROES. SHE IS PERHAPS THE ONLY BEING IN ALL ASGARD WHO DOES NOT FEAR ODIN!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #102.

pollard

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

THE LEGENDARY GODS OF ASGARD

LOKI-- GOD OF MISCHIEF AND STUNTED SPAWN OF THE STORM-GIANTS! ADOPTED BY ODIN SHORTLY AFTER BIRTH, LOKI WAS EVER RESENTFUL OF HIS HALF-BROTHER THOR. USING HIS ABILITIES TO BEND THE LAWS OF NATURE, LOKI HAS BEEN THE SCOURGE OF ASGARD, CONSTANTLY PLOTTING ITS DOWNFALL!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #85.

SIGYN-- DUTIFUL WIFE TO WICKED LOKI AND GODDESS OF FIDELITY. LIKE HER HUSBAND, SHE TOO IS SKILLED IN THE ARTS OF MAGIC, AND ONLY SHE CAN KEEP LOKI FROM INCURRING THE EVERLASTING WRATH OF THE GODS.

FIRST APPEARANCE: THOR #275.

pollard

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

THE LEGENDARY GODS OF ASGARD

BALDER-- GOD OF LIGHT AND REBIRTH AND BELOVED SON OF FRIGGA. ONCE A VALOROUS WARRIOR, HE WAS DISPATCHED THROUGH TREACHERY TO THE REALM OF SHADES! AFTER CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF DEATH, HE HAS MIRACULOUSLY RETURNED!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #85.

pollard

KARNILLA-- QUEEN OF THE NORNS AND SORCERESS SUPREME OF ALL THE REALM. ALTHOUGH A SWORN ENEMY OF ODIN AND ASGARD, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH NOBLE BALDER, AND BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY, SHE WILL STRIVE TO HAVE HIM!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #107.

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

THE LEGENDARY GODS OF ASGARD

ODIN-- LORD OF ASGARD AND RULER OF THE REALM ETERNAL! THE EMBODIMENT OF FIVE ELDER GODS, ODIN BESTOWED LIFE UPON ALL THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF ASGARD AT THE DAWN OF THE NEW AGE. HAILED BY THE GODS AS ALL-FATHER, HIS ONLY TRUE BLOODSON IS THOR!

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #85.

FRIGGA-- QUEEN OF ASGARD AND FAITHFUL WIFE TO ODIN. THE MOTHER-GODDESS OF HEARTH AND HOME AND MARRIAGE, SHE ALONE CAN TAME ODIN'S RAGES OR ROUSE HIM FROM HIS BROODING.

FIRST APPEARANCE: JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #92.

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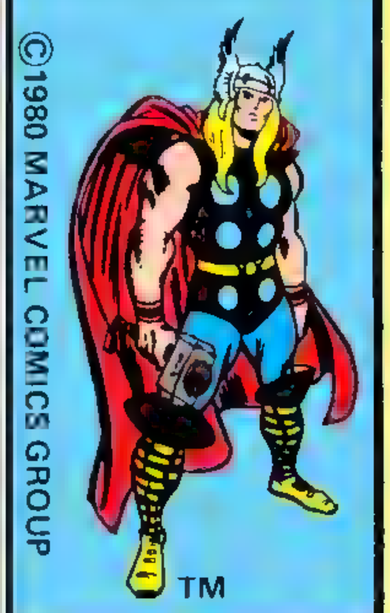

THE MIGHTY THOR™

pollard
RUBINSTEIN

THIS IS IT, BOYS!! WASTE HIM!

IT HAD TO HAPPEN! *THOR* TACKLES THE COMBINED MIGHT OF *BULLDOZER, PILEDRIVER, WRECKER* AND *THUNDERBALL*--

THE WRECKING CREW!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

RECKLESS!

THE MAJESTIC FIGURE OF MIGHTY THOR STREAKS OVER MANHATTAN, AN OBJECT OF WONDER TO COUNTLESS PASSERSBY BELOW-- UNTIL THE LOUD SQUEAL OF SPINNING TIRES UPSTAGES THE THUNDER GOD'S DRAMATIC FLIGHT, GIVING HIM PAUSE...

TAXI

OUTTA MY WAY, GRANDMA! I'M COMIN' THROUGH!

OH, MY GOOD-NESS!

A DISTURBANCE BELOW! THAT CABDRIVER-- IGNORING THE RED LIGHT BY SPEEDING THROUGH THAT CROSSWALK!

YOU JERK! THEY OUGHTTA LOCK MANIACS LIKE YOU UP!

MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO
SCRIPTERS

KEITH POLLARD & CHIC STONE
ARTISTS

JOE ROSEN
LETTERER

GEORGE ROUSSOS
COLORIST

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NORMALLY, SUCH PLEAS OF PEDESTRIANS GO UNHEEDED, BUT ON THIS OCCASION, AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT-- A RECKONING IS IN ORDER.

CRAZY BROAD! WHAT'S SHE COMPLAININ' ABOUT? THAT'S PROBABLY THE MOST EXCITIN' THING THAT'S HAPPENED TA THE OLD BAG IN YEARS!

BESIDES, WHATTA I CARE ABOUT PEDESTRIANS! THE WHOLE BUNCH OF 'EM ARE NUISANCES-- ALWAYS GETTIN' IN MY WAY!

UH OH! I BEEN CHASED BY ALL KINDA NUTS IN MY DAY... BUT I AIN'T NEVER HAD NOBODY COME FLYIN' AFTER ME!

HEY-- WHAT'S HAPPENIN'!? MY BLASTED HACK'S LIFTIN' OFFA THE GROUND!

CALM THYSELF, MORTAL. THOUGH YOU ARE EMPLOYED TO PROVIDE A TRANSPORTATION SERVICE... THIS ONCE, 'TIS *YOU* WHO SHALL BE THE PASSENGER.

BUT IF 'TIS FOOTING YOU WOULD FIND, PERHAPS THIS ROOFTOP WILL SERVE, FOR I WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH YOU.

G-GIMME A BREAK, MAC. I'M JUST TRYIN' TA MAKE A LIVIN'.

PUMME DOWN! I GET AIR-SICK!

CALLOWAY CAB

TAXI

AS YOU WISH, THOUGH I WOULD THINK ONE SUCH AS YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER HERE 'MIDST THE CLOUDS-- MINUS THE EARTHLY ENCUMBRANCES OF TRAFFIC LAWS.

MAKE A LIVING?! HOW-- BY CAUSING INJURY TO THOSE YOU WOULD SERVE... BY ENDANGERING LIVES IN PURSUIT OF PROFIT?

Y-YEAH... I-I MEAN NO! *NO!*

NOW, IF THY RECKLESS BEHAVIOR IS ENDED, I WILL TAKE YOU BACK TO THE STREET, WHERE YOU WILL *APOLOGIZE* TO THOSE WHOSE LIVES YOU JEOPARDIZED. IF NOT--

SURE! WHATEVER YA SAY. I LEARNED MY LESSON.

MOMENTS LATER, CAB AND CABBIE ARE CARRIED EFFORTLESSLY EARTHWARD...

GOOD WOMAN, I HAVE RETURNED WITH THE CULPRIT TO MAKE AMENDS.

TAXI

UH--LOOK, LADY, I'M REAL SORRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. ANYTHING I CAN DO TO MAKE IT UP TO YA LEMME KNOW.

JUST BE CAREFUL IN THE FUTURE, YOUNG MAN. THAT'S ALL.

THANK YOU, MISTER THOR. BUT IT REALLY WOULDN'T MATTER EVEN IF I WAS STRUCK AND KILLED. I'M ALONE--NO HUSBAND OR RELATIVES...THE WORLD WOULDN'T MISS ONE LESS OLD LADY.

PET

MADAME, *I* WOULD. AGE DOES NOT DIMINISH ONE'S WORTH. EACH LIFE IS PRECIOUS BEYOND ALL UNDERSTANDING. YOU *ARE* IMPORTANT.

REMEMBER THIS ALWAYS.

FAREWELL.

CHAR

SO, ONCE AGAIN MY REASONS FOR REMAINING ON EARTH BECOME CLEAR... THE SIMPLE PLEASURE OF AIDING A SINGLE MORTAL-- E'EN IF IT NOT BE AGAINST SOME COSTUMED FOE...

...NOT ALL THE GLORY IN ASGARD COULD BE SO REWARDING AS RECEIVING HER THANKS.

BUT NOW, 'TIS TIME FOR THE GODLY VISAGE OF THOR--

--TO BE REPLACED BY THAT OF HIS MORTAL COUNTERPART, THE LAME PHYSICIAN, *DR. DONALD BLAKE.*

THE DRAMATIC FIGURE STAMPS HIS ENCHANTED MALLET ONCE UPON THE GROUND, CAUSING A MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION.

WHA--? I BEEN STANDIN' HERE AN HOUR AND I DIDN'T SEE THIS GUY WALK IN THE ALLEY. WHERE'S HE COMIN' FROM?

AS THOR, I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM EARTH FOR SUCH GREAT LENGTHS OF TIME, THAT I'VE LOST MY MEDICAL PRACTICE AS A RESULT.

WEST SIDE MEDICAL CE

Si

TWA

MAYBE HERE, IN THIS WESTSIDE CLINIC, I CAN START REBUILDING MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE FROM SCRATCH. AT LEAST THE HOURS WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ALLOW FOR THOSE FREQUENT ABSENCES NECESSARY WHEN I BECOME THE THUNDER GOD.

MY NAME IS BLAKE, I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR. JEFFRIES.

PLEASE SIGN

YES. GO RIGHT IN.

I'M *LIONEL JEFFRIES.* WHAT BRINGS YOU UP THIS WAY, BLAKE?

A PROFESSIONAL FRIEND OF MINE SUGGESTED I TRY FOR A POSITION HERE SOME TIME AGO. *

*THOR #267--J.S.

I HAD A PRIVATE PRACTICE FOR SOME YEARS-- BUT I UH, BEGAN TRAVELING, AND KEEPING IT BECAME MORE THAN I COULD HANDLE.

SO YOU LOST YOUR PRACTICE--

--RAN OUT OF MONEY, AND NOW WANT TO START AT THE BOTTOM AGAIN. FRANKLY, I'M SKEPTICAL, DR. BLAKE.

BUT WHEN A PHYSICIAN OF YOUR PAST REPUTATION AND SKILL COMES KNOCKING AT MY DOOR, I WILL MOST CERTAINLY GIVE YOU SOME CONSIDERATION.

THAT'S FINE, DOCTOR. I'VE LEFT A HOTEL NUMBER I CAN BE REACHED AT.

YOU SHOULD HEAR FROM ME BY THE END OF THE WEEK. IF YOU'D LIKE, CARLA WILL SHOW YOU THE FACILITY.

COME RIGHT THIS WAY, DOCTOR.

I HOPE HE WASN'T TOO ROUGH ON YOU. HE HAS A LOT ON HIS MIND, JUST KEEPING THE CLINIC ABOVE WATER.

I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY.

THIS IS OUR NEW X-RAY LAB. I'M SURE IF YOU'RE TAKEN ON, YOU'LL BE-COME QUITE FAMILIAR WITH IT.

X RAY

AND AS ONE TOUR BEGINS, ANOTHER IS REACHING ITS CONCLUSION-- THIS ONE AT MANHATTAN'S ***RYKERS ISLAND PRISON.***

NOW LISSEN UP, HEINTZ. THIS IS THE IMPOUNDED WEAPONS ROOM, WHERE WE KEEP JUNK CONFIS-CATED FROM THOSE SUPER-POWERED CRIMINALS WE GOT COOLING IN CELL BLOCK 8.

SOMETIMES WE HANG ONTO THE STUFF, OTHER TIMES IT GETS TRANSFERRED ELSEWHERE FOR STUDY. DEPENDS ON WHAT THE FEDS WANT TO DO.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT-- YOUR JOB IS JUST TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON THINGS TILL YOU'RE RELIEVED. AND KEEP YOUR HANDS *OFF* THE MERCHANDISE--I MEAN IT. SOME OF IT MIGHT BE DANGEROUS.

THIS PLACE IS A DISORGAN-IZED ***MESS***. I DON'T SUPPOSE IT WOULD HURT TO STRAIGHT-EN IT UP A BIT.

MIGHT EVEN PICK UP A FEW EXTRA POINTS AT THE FRONT OFFICE.

I WONDER WHAT IN HECK THIS CROWBAR IS DOING HERE WITH ALL THIS SCIENTIFIC STUFF.

UH OH. IT'S STARTING TO GLOW.

I-IT'S CRAZY. I CAN HEAR SOME VOICE IN MY HEAD TELLING ME TO WALK OUT OF HERE.

I CAN'T RESIST...CAN'T HELP MYSELF. I'M BEING FORCED TO OBEY.

HEY! AM I SEEING THINGS, OR IS THAT HEINTZ--*GLOWING?!*

HE'S GOT THE WRECKER'S *CROWBAR!* WE'D BETTER STOP HIM--*FAST!*

CAN'T LET THEM GET IN MY WAY. NOTHING MUST STOP ME FROM REACHING MY GOAL...

...THE PRISON'S MAXIMUM SECURITY SECTION.

JUST TRY TO WING HIM.

OUR BULLETS ARE BOUNCING OFF THAT NUTTY AURA HE'S GOT AROUND HIM.

WITHIN MOMENTS, THE ENTRANCED FIGURE HAS DISPOSED OF ALL OPPOSITION AND SMASHED HIS WAY INTO ONE VERY SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED CELL... HOUSING AN EAGERLY AWAITING OCCUPANT.

GREAT! I KNEW THAT CROWBAR WAS REALLY A PART OF ME! I KNEW IF I KEPT TRYING TO MAKE MIND CONTACT WITH IT DAY AFTER DAY...TO MAKE IT COME TO ME...

...SOMEHOW, 'CAUSE'A THE POWER IT'S GOT--IT'D FIND A WAY. AND NOW IT'S *MINE!*

OKAY, STOOGE! LEMME HAVE IT NICE'N EASY.

ALL I GOTTA DO IS TOUCH THIS THING AND THE WHOLE STINKIN' WORLD BETTER LOOK OUT!

THE WRECKER LIVES AGAIN!

AND EVEN MY WRECKIN' DUDS CAME ON SOON AS I GRABBED MY CROWBAR.

OH! I CAN MOVE AGAIN. THAT VOICE IS OUT OF MY HEAD. IF I--

SHADDUP, PUNK! I DON'T WANNA HEAR YER LIFE STORY!

CASE YOU DON'T KNOW--YER A HOSTAGE! NOBODY'S DOIN' ANYTHING TA ME AS LONG AS I GOT YOU, PIPSQUEAK.

AND NOW YOU'RE GONNA TELL ME WHERE THEY'RE KEEPIN' THE REST OF MY MOB--IF YOU WANNA KEEP YOUR HEAD ON STRAIGHT!

A-ANYTHING YOU SAY.

THEY'RE HERE-- IN THIS CELLBLOCK.

I SEE 'EM, KID, CLAM UP!

WE KNEW DAT YUD COME FER US, WRECKAH.

STAND BACK, FRANKLIN, I'M MAKIN' AN ENTRANCE!

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THE WRECKER WAS JUST A SMALL-TIME BURGLAR UNTIL SOME ASGARDIAN SORCERESS CAME DOWN TO EARTH AND ACCIDENTALLY ZAPPED HIM FULL OF MAGICAL ENERGY, THINKING HE WAS SOMEONE ELSE. *

BUT SEVERAL YEARS BACK, THOR WHIPPED HIM AND PUT HIM IN JAIL. A FEW OF US HELPED HIM ESCAPE AND HE MADE US INTO SUPER-POWERED PARTNERS TO HELP HIM FIND *THOR*.

THEN WE GOT CAPTURED BEFORE WE COULD FIND HIM AND WERE DUMPED BACK IN PRISON. NOW I'VE GOT A HUNCH OUR STAY'S JUST BEEN SHORTENED.

*THOR #148.-- J. S.

ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS, WE'RE GETTIN' *OUTTA* HERE. YA ALL KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

GRAB ONTO THE CROWBAR AND CONCENTRATE --*CONCENTRATE!*

OUTSIDE, THUNDERHEADS MASS, THE SKY CRACKLES IN ELEMENTAL ANTICIPATION, AS WITHIN THOSE FOREBODING PRISON WALLS A MIRACLE OCCURS... A MIRACLE THAT TRANSFORMS FOUR ORDINARY CRIMINALS INTO THE MATCHLESS MENACE OF--

--THE WRECKING CREW!

THUNDERBALL!

BULLDOZER!

PILEDRIVER!

DON'T STAND THERE ADMIRIN' YERSELVES... WE'RE MOVIN' OUT!

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON YET, SO HOLD YOUR FIRE UNTIL I GIVE THE ORDER.

FREEZE! YOU HAND OVER OUR MAN AND WALK QUIETLY BACK TO YOUR CELLS.

OR YEZ ARE GONNA MAKE US, RIGHT? HAW! LET'S NAIL DEM!

NOW! FIRE! FI--UGGHHH!

TOO LATE, POPS! THE WRECKING CREW'S COMIN' THROUGH! LIKE OLD TIMES, RIGHT, BOYS?

YUP! YOU SAID A MOUTHFUL, BOSS.

I'VE BEEN PLANNING THIS THING FOR MONTHS. WE CAN GRAB A PATROL BOAT RIGHT HERE.

REGULAR BULLETS DON'T SEEM TO BE HAVING MUCH EFFECT ON THESE JOKERS. NO WAY I CAN STOP THEM FROM ESCAPING!

BRATCH!

WELL, NOW THAT WE'VE MADE IT OUT OF THAT DUMP--WHERE'S OUR FIRST PORT-OF-CALL, WRECKER?

WE'RE HEADIN' DUE EAST TO MANHATTAN, T-BALL, 'CAUSE THAT'S WHERE *THOR* HANGS HIS HAMMER, AND *THIS* TIME--HE'S GONNA BE *OURS!*

I BEEN WAITIN' TA CRUSH THAT GUY EVER SINCE HE PUT ME IN THE SLAMMER TWICE, AND BESIDES...

...HE'S THE ONLY GUY AROUND THAT'S GOT ASGARDIAN POWERS LIKE US, SO I GOTTA FINISH 'IM JUST TA SHOW THE WORLD WHO'S TOP DOG.

RYKER PRISON

BUT I WANNA GRAB SOME GRUB BEFORE WE DO ANYTHING, AND I KNOW JUST THE PLACE FOR GREAT FOOD.

SHORTLY, AFTER STOMPING CROSSTOWN...

YOU CLOWNS AIN'T RUN INTA THOR YET-- LIKE ME. LEMME TELL YA, HE'S TOUGH...REAL TOUGH. BUT THIS TIME WE'RE GONNA WEAR 'IM DOWN AND WASTE 'IM. 'TILL THERE AIN'T EVEN BONES LEFT FOR THE BUZZARDS. I OWE THE BUM FER WHAT HE DID TO ME.

NOW LET'S EAT. I THINK BETTER ON A FULL STOMACH.

GRANT T BAR

MAC DONALD'S

SKRAASSHH!

THE WRECKING CREW'S HERE--AND WE'RE HUNGRY. AND WE DON'T WAIT ON NO LINES. NOW EVERYBODY CLEAR OUT.

DIDJA HEAR ME?

I SAID--

GET OUT!

BWA-

-AAMM!

THAT'S BETTER. I HATE BEING CRAMPED WHEN I'M CHOWIN' DOWN. MAN, IF THEY HAD BIG MACS IN PRISON, I MIGHTA STAYED.

HEY, WITH NOBODY HEAH, HOW CAN AH GIT ONE'A THESE HEAH MACS MADE MAH WAY?

THEY ONLY DO THAT AT BURGER QUEEN, YOU MORON!

LET'S US GET DOWN TA CASES. HOW'S WE GONNA GET GOLDI-LOCKS OUT IN DE OPEN, SO'S WE CAN TRASH 'IM?

NO SWEAT. WE'LL FLATTEN SOMETHING REAL BIG AND IMPORTANT. WHEN HE HEARS THE WRECKER DID IT-- HE'LL COME RUNNIN'.

I'VE GOT AN IDEA, WRECKER.

NO ONE'S EVER LAID A GLOVE ON *LINCOLN CENTER.* WE COULD HAVE A FIELD DAY THERE WITH ALL THOSE FANCY BUILDINGS! AND THOR'S SURE TO SHOW UP IF WE DARE HIM IN PUBLIC.

YEAH! I LIKE IT! I LIKE IT! ALL THEM PRETTY BUILDIN'S... ALL THEM NICE STUFFED SHIRTS GOIN' TO SHOWS. IT'LL BE A RIOT. LET'S GO.

LINCOLN CENTER, CONSTRUCTED IN 1959, COVERING FOUR BLOCKS OF REHABILITATED REAL ESTATE... THE CULTURAL CAPITAL OF NEW YORK CITY'S PERFORMING ARTS. IT'S HOME TO THE METROPOLITAN OPERA, THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, AND THE JULLIARD SCHOOL OF MUSIC.

AND THIS EVENING, THE PRIDE OF THE UPPER WEST SIDE WILL PLAY HOST TO FOUR VISITORS WHOSE GOAL IS SOMETHING LESS THAN CLASSICAL ENLIGHTENMENT...

YUH ALL JUST LISSEN UP, 'FORE YUH HEAD INSIDE. WE GOT A LITTLE SOMETHIN' TUH SAY.

DON'T WORRY, HONEY. THE GUY WITH THE CROWBAR MUST BE ONE OF THOSE ARTSY ORCHESTRA LEADERS. JUST SMILE.

YOU FOLKS JUST KEEP ON HAVIN' FUN. THIS IS JUST OUR WAY OF INVITIN' THAT YELLA SKUNK THOR TA A LITTLE MEETIN'A THE MINDS WE WANNA HAVE WITH HIM.

AND WE WANNA HAVE IT HERE AND NOW, OR *ELSE!* BOYS...?

YEEEHAHHHH! I HEAH YUH TALKIN', BOSS-MAN. IT'S GONNA BE A GAS LEVELIN' THIS HEAH PLACE FUH LAUGHS.

WROOM!

DIS AIN'T FOR LAUGHS, BULLDOZER, DIS IS SERIOUS WOIK. AWWW, YOUSE AIN'T EVEN LISSENIN'.

SKRAKK!

YAAAHHH! NEXT TIME I'M STICKIN' WITH SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK!

BAAKKT!

I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL THOR SHOWS UP. I'VE OFTEN WONDERED HOW MY BALL AND CHAIN WOULD FARE AGAINST HIS HAMMER.

THE CONFLICT WILL COME SOON FOR MERE BLOCKS AWAY, THE MIGHTY THOR STREAKS THROUGH THE TWILIGHT SKY TOWARD THE MIDTOWN HOTEL WHICH IS HIS TEMPORARY RESIDENCE...

AFTER A LONG DAY IN PURSUIT OF EMPLOYMENT AND PERMANENT LODGINGS AS DON BLAKE, 'TIS TIME AGAIN THAT BLAKE'S OTHER SELF SAW THE DWINDLING LIGHT OF DAY...

HERE ABOVE THE CITY STREETS, I CAN--*HOLD!* WHAT ARE THOSE SOUNDS OF DESTRUCTION? 'TIS TOO LATE FOR CITY CONSTRUCTORS TO BE AT WORK!

'TIS COMING FROM LINCOLN CENTER! TO THINK SUCH A PLACE--WHOSE BEAUTY RIVALS THE PLAZAS OF ASGARD ITSELF, SHOULD SUFFER SUCH CARNAGE.

HOLD, VILLAINS! IF IT IS DESTRUCTION YE CRAVE, THEN ATTEMPT IT UPON ONE WHO MAY STRIKE BACK--AND NOT UPON LIFELESS MASONRY.

IT'S ABOUT TIME DAT DOPE SHOWED!

YOU CALLED IT, GOLDY. BEFORE WE'RE DONE WITH YOU, YER GONNA WISH YA LOOKED AS GOOD AS THIS "LIFELESS MASONRY!"

THUNDERBALL... START ROLLIN'.

BETTER SAY YOUR PRAYERS, LONGHAIR, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE PRETTY.

YOUR WORDS MEAN LITTLE TO ME. I HAVE FACED *ANOTHER* WITH BALL AND CHAIN MANY TIMES IN THE PAST!

YOU MUST MEAN CRUSHER CREEL--*THE ABSORBING MAN*, IN PRISON WE HEARD ABOUT YOUR BATTLES WITH HIM.

AYE, THEN YOU KNOW THAT ON EACH OCCASION WE FOUGHT-- IT WAS THOR WHO EMERGED THE VICTOR. AS IT SHALL BE TODAY!

CHANNKK!

DAT'S WISHFUL THINKIN', JOIK. 'CAUSE DERE'S ONLY ONE'A DAT ABSORBIN' GUY...

WOK!

THAMP!

...AND DERE'S *FOUR*'A US. I LIKE DEM KINDA ODDS, 'CAUSE WE FIGHT DOITY.

I T'INK I'M GONNA SQUEEZE HIS BRAINS OUT THROUGH HIS EARS. WHAT DUH YOUSE T'INK?

THAT'S A NICE IDEA, PARDNUH, AND WHILE YOU'RE DOIN' THAT...

EEEYYYYY! HE WAS FAKIN' IT. DAT AIN'T FAIR!

... AH'M GONNA GET ME A LOOK-SEE AT THIS FANCY-PANTS HAMMER. MIGHT BE GOOD FOAH SHOEIN' HORSES.

NICE MOVE, THUNDER GOD. UNFORTUNATELY YOU'VE SET YOURSELF UP FOR--

THIS! AHHH--WHAT CATHARSIS! I'VE DREAMED ABOUT THIS IN STIR.

SLAMM!

C'MON, CURLY--GET UP! HOW DO YA LIKE HAVIN' YER OWN CRUMMY ASGARDIAN POWERS THROWN RIGHT BACK AT'CHA!

BY YMIR'S BEARD! YOU PROFANE THE VERY WORD ASGARDIAN AS IT PASSES YOUR LIPS. YOU SHALL *PAY* FOR THAT.

PRETTY TOUGH TALK FROM A GUY LAYIN' FLAT ON HIS BACK. BULLDOZER... PLOW 'IM UNDER!

MUH PLEASURE, WRECKER.

THIS HEAH'D BE A WHOLE LOT EASIER ON YUH, IF YUH JUST STAYED DOWN.

BUT IF YUH WANNAH GIVE THE FOLKS THEAH MONEY'S WORTH-- IT'S RIGHT BY ME.

YUH STILL GITTIN' STOMPED INTA THE MIDDLE'A NEXT WEEK.

BOOMPF!

I WEARY OF THIS FOOLISH CONTEST. 'TIS THOR WHO IS THE MASTER HERE! 'TIS I WHO WIELD THE POWER OF THE REALM ETERNAL BY RIGHT OF BIRTH-- NOT ACCIDENT.

UUGGHH!

AND 'TIS I WHO SHALL PREVAIL!

AGGHH!

THAMP!

HOOLLLEEE SPIT! WHAT A PUNCH! I THINK I'LL GIVE THIS SLUGFEST ONE MORE TRY--AND THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE. I DON'T WANT TO END UP LIKE THAT.

MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THAT'S A HUMAN BEING THAT JUST CAME FLYING OUT OF LINCOLN CENTER.

SKRUNCH

YEAH-- BUT LOOK AT THE SIZE OF HIM! WHAT COULD'A DONE THIS TO *HIM*?!

BIG DEAL! ANYBODY CAN LICK A CLOWN WHO GETS INTO A FIGHT LEADING WITH HIS *HEAD*.

BUT I CAN KEEP MY DISTANCE AND STILL SMASH YOU--

--LIKE SO.

YOU ARE AS FOOLISH AS YOUR FALLEN COMRADE.

FOR IN ANNOUNCING YOUR INTENTIONS TO ME-- YOU HAVE *DOOMED* THEM...AND YOUR-SELF.

UH OH.

I T'INK T-BALL'S GOIN' DOWN FER DA COUNT, BOSS. LEMME AT 'IM... I CAN PUT DIS TOIKEY IN DA COOLER FAH KEEPS.

YES! NOW-- WHILE HE'S OFF-BALANCE. *HIT HIM!*

DAT'S ALL I WANTED TA HEAR.

OOHH.

FOIST, I'M GONNA USE MY MITTS TA POUND DAT POINTY LITTLE HEAD'A YEZ SO FAR DOWN 'TWEEN DEM SHOULDERS...

...YOUSE IS GONNA HAVE TO LOOK THROUGH YA BELLYBUTTON TA SEE DAYLIGHT.

WDAM!

DEN I'M GONNA USE T-BALL'S CHAIN TA SQUEEZE YEZ SO HARD, YA NOGGIN'S JEST GONNA POP UP AGAIN.

DIS IS GREAT. I BET YOUSE DON'T DIE NO DIFFERENT DAN US -- DO YA? DO YA!?!

ULLGGHH!!!

HEY, WRECKER... TAKE A LOOK AT-- UGH!

YES, WRECKER -- LOOK AT THE LAST OF THOSE YOU SOUGHT TO AID YOU --

--DEFEATED AS YOU STOOD BY AND WATCHED.

YEAH! WELL, NOW THAT THUNDERBALL'S BACK AMONG THE LIVIN', ME'N HIM ARE GONNA DO A DUET ON YER FACE. LET'S GET 'IM!

THIS ISN'T WORKING. THOR'S TAKEN OUR BEST BLOWS AND HE'S STANDING THERE LIKE WE NEVER HIT HIM. I MAY NOT LIKE THE CREEP -- BUT SUICIDAL I'M NOT!

WRECKER, OLD BUDDY, I'VE GOT SOME BAD NEWS FOR YOU...

...DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR--ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE LOSING. LOTS OF LUCK! BYE!

I DON'T NEED THAT GOOD-FER-NOTHIN' BUM! BLONDIE--AFTER ALL THIS TIME, IT'S NOW GONNA BE MY PLEASURE--

--WATCHIN' YOU EAT THIS ROD AS I CRAM IT DOWN YER SCRAWNY THROAT.

'COURSE I'LL LETCHA WHET YER APPETITE WITH A LITTLE SNACK OF A FEW MILLION PIECES 'A *GLASS!*

CHANKK!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTIN' ANY STUCK IN YER SKIN-- 'CAUSE I'LL JUST PRY 'EM OUT REAL DAINTY-LIKE WITH MY *CROWBAR.*

SKASSHHH!

MOMENTARILY TURNING HIS BACK ON HIS PUGNACIOUS OPPONENT, THOR RUSHES TO VIEW THE DAMAGE DONE TO HUMAN LIFE.

MOST SEEM UNHARMED-- BUT A WOMAN HAS BEEN STRICKEN BY THE FRAGMENTS.

OH, THAT POOR OLD LADY! SHE WAS HIT IN THE NECK BY THE *GLASS!*

NO--! 'TIS THE SAME WOMAN I SPOKE WITH AT THE CROSSWALK THIS MORN!

AND NOW HERE SHE LIES -- WITH NO PULSE... *DEAD.* WHY? *WHY!?!*

'TIS *YOU* WHO ARE THE CAUSE-- *WRECKER!* YOU WHO WOULD SLAY EVEN INNOCENTS IN YOUR MADNESS!

WHERE ARE YOUR SNEERS NOW, VERMIN -- YOUR ARROGANCE AND BRAVADO?

TLAP!

HEY -- TAKE IT EASY! I-I DIDN'T MEAN TA KILL NOBODY. THAT WASN'T IN THE PLAN!

ALL I WANTED WUZ TA GET BACK AT YA -- AND PROVE I WAS STRONGER... EVEN THOUGH YER A *REAL* ASGARDIAN.

BY BEATIN' YOU, I WUZ GONNA SHOW I WAS THE MOST POWERFUL GUY WALKIN' AROUND. YA *GOTTA* BELIEVE ME!

SO BE IT! IF 'TIS POWER YOU SEEK -- THEN THOR SHALL SEE TO IT YOU POSSESS MIGHT BEYOND MEASURE.

Y-YOUR HAMMER, IT'S STARTIN' TA GLOW. I CAN'T LET GO OF IT. WHAT'S HAPPENIN' TA ME!?

YOU CRAVED POWER! NOW *ALL* THAT MJOLNIR MAY IMPART WILL COURSE THROUGH YOU. REVEL IN IT, WRECKER... FOR YOU SHALL KNOW THE POWER OF A GOD!

NO -- NO! I'M BURNIN' UP! NO MORE! STOP! *AAAAHHHHHH!!!*

HE LIVES... THOUGH HIS MORTAL FORM COULD NOT CONTAIN THE EXCESSIVE ENERGIES HE WAS SUBJECT TO.

OR'S

POLICE 68

EMERGENCY

EMERGENCY

STILL, HE *DOES* LIVE... WHILE ONE FAR MORE DESERVING OF LIFE DIES -- *ALONE.* WE PASSED BUT A FEW WORDS AND YET I FELT THE DESPAIR, THE EMPTINESS THAT WAS HER LIFE.

IT IS OVER NOW. *DEATH* HAS CLAIMED HER. I PRAY TO ODIN THAT WHEREVER SHE MAY BE, THAT ELDERLY AND GOOD WOMAN KNOWS SHE HAS TOUCHED THE HEART OF A GOD.

NEXT: THE RETURN OF AN ANGEL OF DEATH!

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS

LOVE'S LABORS LOST

IN A TRANQUIL GARDEN IN THE CITY OF ASGARD, DIMENSIONS FROM EARTH, **BALDER THE BRAVE, GOD OF LIGHT**, CONTEMPLATES THE LOWLY MISTLETOE, WHOSE PRICK DELIVERED HIM INTO A DEATH-LIKE STATE UNTIL BUT A FEW DAYS AGO. NOW, HIS SOBER THOUGHTS ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE APPROACH OF THE EVIL **KARNILLA, QUEEN OF THE NORNS...**

THERE YOU ARE, MY BRAVE ONE. I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THEE. I HAVE HAD AFFAIRS OF GREAT IMPORT TO ATTEND TO, ELSE I WOULD HAVE SPOKEN WITH THEE EARLIER.

SPEAK THEN. NO DOUBT YOU WOULD ASK WHY I DID TURN AWAY FROM THEE AT THE RECENT FEAST, CELEBRATING ASGARD'S SURVIVAL OF RAGNAROK.*

*IT HAPPENED IN **THOR** #301 -- J.S.

SUCH A MINOR MATTER WE WILL NOT MENTION, BELOVED. LET US INSTEAD TALK OF OUR FUTURE TOGETHER, OF--

NAY. THERE BE BARRIERS BETWEEN US NOW.

WHATE'ER THEY MAY BE, LET ONE EMBRACE MELT THEM, LIKE SUNLIGHT ON FALLEN SNOW.

ART THOU *BLIND*, WOMAN? CAN THOU NOT SEE I HAVE *CHANGED*?

CHANGED? I NOTE, ONLY THAT THY HAIR BE WHITE, WHERE ONCE 'TWAS BROWN. WHAT ELSE BE THERE? PERHAPS THOU SHOULD EXPLAIN.

FOR ODIN TO FULFILL THE PROPHECIES OF RAGNAROK, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE BLIND GOD HODER--

--TO *SLAY* ME WITH A MISTLETOE ARROW.

"BUT AT ODIN'S COMMAND, THE TINIEST SPARK OF LIFE REMAINED... THOUGH FOR ALL APPEARANCES, I HAD DIED. THUS, THE *PROPHECY* OF MY DEATH WAS FULFILLED. RAGNAROK WOULD COME.

"AND AS I LAY ON MY FUNERAL BIER, MY SPIRIT WANDERED THE HALLS OF *VALHALLA* --

"--THE ASGARDIAN LAND OF THE DEAD. A PLACE WHICH ONCE DID RING WITH THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF THOSE DEPARTED IN ETERNAL BATTLE.

"YET, NOW IT HAD BEEN *USURPED* BY THE DEATH GODDESS *HELA*, WHO TRANSFORMED IT INTO A BLEAK REALM OF SPIRITS IN TORMENT. WHEN RAGNAROK PASSED--I RETURNED TO LIFE... DIFFERENT FOR MY EXPERIENCE THERE."

BUT WHAT DID THY JOURNEY AMONG THE DEAD DO TO THEE, BELOVED?

MY PERCEPTIONS ARE ALTERED. NO LONGER MAY I BE CALLED *WARRIOR*, NO LONGER MAY I SLAY ANY FOE...

...KNOWING THAT HE WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN HELA'S DREADED SHADOW-LAND. VALHALLA IS *LOST* TO US!

I UNDERSTAND THY FEELINGS OF REGRET, BALDER. BUT WHY DOES THIS COME BETWEEN US? SURELY ODIN WILL MOVE TO RECLAIM HIS VALHALLA WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT.

'TIS NOT ONLY WAR WHICH I SEE DIFFERENTLY NOW, NORN QUEEN ...'TIS *THEE* AS WELL.

I SEE THEE FOR WHAT THOU *TRULY* ART... AN ALLURING THOUGH *EVIL* BEING WHO HAS MASQUERADED AS ONE BENEVOLENT--

--SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU BELIEVED THAT IS HOW BEST TO WIN MY *FAVOR.*

NAY, BALDER, THAT IS NOT TRUE! MY LOVE FOR THEE HAS *CHANGED* ME. HAVE I NOT ACTED IN ASGARD'S CAUSE IN THE PAST?

THOU DID AID THE REALM ETERNAL *ONLY* WHEN IT DID ULTIMATELY BENEFIT THEE...

...OR WHEN ASGARD'S COLLAPSE WOULD HAVE PRECIPITATED THINE *OWN.* THOU ART THE SAME AS EVER.

HAST THOU NEVER IMAGINED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO RULE THE NORN KINGDOM BY MY SIDE-- AS MY KING? DOES THIS VISION NOT PLEASE THEE?

I DESIRE NOT A KINGDOM-- OR A QUEEN. THOU ACT THE TEMPTRESS TO SWAY ME... BUT THINE EFFORTS HAVE FAILED.

"TEMPTRESS!" THOU WOULD REDUCE MY LOVE TO SO *BASE* A LEVEL? THOU HAST SPURNED AND INSULTED THE QUEEN OF THE NORNS FOR THE LAST TIME!

AND FOR THINE EFFRONTERY, I SHALL MAKE THEE PAY, BRAVE ONE-- WITH THY VERY *LIFE.*

BY THE POWER OF THE NORNS, I DO SUMMON FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY DOMAIN-- THE DREADED *BARBARIC!*

THERE, LOYAL ONE! *THERE* IS YOUR VICTIM... ONE WHO HAS MADE A MOCKERY OF KARNILLA. AT MY COMMAND -- *SLAY HIM!*

'TIS MY PLEASURE, MY QUEEN.

ART THOU FROZEN IN FEAR, VICTIM -- OR IS THY PLACID POSE SOME FORM OF TRICKERY? TIS NO MATTER...

...FOR YOU SHALL BE DESTROYED WHERE YOU STAND! EH? MY FIRST BLOW -- AND HE STANDS UNHARMED?!

BOK

SRAK

'TIS BEYOND BELIEF! THOUGH I *STRIKE* WITH ALL THE POWER I POSSESS -- NOT THE SMALLEST WOUND DO I INFLICT!

TAK

I BEG FORGIVENESS, MY QUEEN, BUT THINE ENEMY SEEMS BEYOND INJURY. PUNISH ME AS THOU WILL!

ARISE! 'TIS NOT THY FAULT... FOR DESPITE HIS "DEATH," BALDER MUST STILL BE UNDER THE LONG-SINCE CAST SPELL OF *QUEEN FRIGGA*...

...WHICH PROTECTS HIM FROM HARM BY ANY LIVING THING --

-- SAVE *ONE*. THE MISTLETOE WAS BEYOND FRIGGA'S ENCHANTMENT. BALDER MAY *STILL* BE SLAIN BY IT.

NOW ARMED WITH THAT WHICH MAY *DESTROY* THEE-- I'LL PIERCE THY HEART AND SEE THEE DEAD!

STILL YOU REFUSE TO FLINCH, THOUGH DEATH APPROACHES. AT *LEAST* RAISE THY HAND IN DEFENSE, THAT I MAY NOT BE CALLED A SLAUGHTERER OF LAMBS.

DO AS THOU DOST WISH. I AM NO LONGER A WARRIOR AND I WILL *NOT* DEFY THEE. MINE IS THE WAY OF THE LAMB, TO STRIKE NOT 'GAINST MINE ENEMY.

A FITTING EPITAPH, FOOLISH ONE!

WHAT BE THIS? I'M *FADING* BEFORE KILLING THEE. *I HAVE FAILED!!*

BEGONE, FAITHFUL ONE! BACK TO THE NORN REALM. 'TIS *KARNILLA* WHO HAS FAILED. THOUGH IN SUCH A WRATH--

--I HAVE DESTROYED OTHERS FOR FAR LESS OFFENSE...'TIS NOT IN MY HEART TO SLAY MY BELOVED.

DOES THAT REFUSAL NOT SHOW HOW *DEEPLY* MY LOVE FOR THEE RUNS, BALDER?

THAT THOU WOULD E'EN THREATEN THE LIFE OF ONE SO "BELOVED," MILADY SPEAKS MORE TRUTHFULLY OF THY CHARACTER.

NOW, I WOULD BE *ALONE.*

MY RUSE TO WIN THEE BACK HAS BUT TURNED THEE FURTHER FROM ME. BUT 'TIS NOT *OVER* BETWEEN US THIS EASILY, MY BRAVE ONE.

I'LL NOT QUICKLY RELEASE WHAT SHOULD BE KARNILLA'S! WITH ALL THE SORCEROUS MIGHT AT MY COMMAND, I'LL HAVE THEE *BEGGING* TO BE MINE!

NEXT: The ABDUCTION of BALDER!

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

CRY OF THE DEATH-ANGEL!

Plus: ALL-NEW TALE OF ASGARD!

HOME OF THE LEGENDARY NORSE GODS!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR—and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning—and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

HARK, THE HERALD ANGEL LIVES!

THE BLEAK DECEMBER WIND GIVES MANHATTANITES SOMETHING ELSE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT BESIDES INFLATION AND SUBWAY CRIME. BUT FOR ONE RESIDENT OF THE CITY, THE MIGHTY **THOR**, GOD OF THUNDER, IT IS THE KIND OF WEATHER TO SET HIS NORSE BLOOD STIRRING.

'TIS NOW, WHEN SNOW BLANKETS MUCH OF EARTH, THAT I MOST MISS THE SIGHT OF ETERNAL ASGARD--HOME. BUT I HAVE CHOSEN TO REMAIN HERE WITH THE MORTAL HALF OF MY HERITAGE... AND THAT IS A DECISION NOT LIGHTLY MADE.

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AND BELOW, IN WHAT IS CALLED THE UPPER WEST SIDE, I SHALL FIND A PLACE OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! HELP THE NEEDY!

WHEN I HAVE DWELLED IN THIS CITY IN THE PAST, 'TWAS AS AN AFFLUENT PRACTITIONER OF MEDICINE.

BUT ON THE MORROW I BEGIN EMPLOYMENT ANEW, AS A PHYSICIAN IN A CLINIC SERVING THE POOR AND DESTITUTE.

WHAT?! RUFFIANS SEEK TO INJURE THAT COLORFULLY GARBED MORTAL!

YO, LEROY! IT'S ONE 'A THEM SUPER-DUDES!

BY ODIN'S SACRED SPEAR, E'EN ONE DEVOTED TO CHARITY, IS PREY TO SUCH AS THEY.

ART THOU HURT, GOOD MAN?

HUH? ER, UH, NO SIR!

LET'S SPLIT! THAT FLYIN' CRACKER CAN'T BUST US 'LESS HE CATCHES US!

I SHALL SEE TO IT THINE OFFENDERS MAKE REPARATIONS TO THEE.

WELL, I SURE AIN'T GONNA HANG AROUND WAITIN'!

THOUGH THEY DOUBTLESSLY KNOW THESE STREETS BETTER THAN THOR--

--THEY CANNOT HOPE TO MATCH THE ADVANTAGE OF AN AERIAL PERSPECTIVE.

AHA-- RUNNERS AFOOT IN YON ALLEY!

HOLD, ONES OF ILL-INTENT. THOR WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH YE.

WHY, THEY BE MERE YOUTHS.

OH, SPIT! I-IT'S HIM!

HE AIN'T POUNDIN' ON MY SKULL WITH THAT SLEDGE-HAMMER.

I SURE AIN'T GONNA RUSH 'IM FIRST, BRO!

LOWER THY WEAPONS OR FACE THE WRATH OF THOR! ARE YE OF SUCH SCRUPLES TO ATTACK AN INNOCENT VENDOR OF GOOD WILL?

I GOT NEWS FOR YOU, THOR. THAT WASN'T A SIDEWALK SANTA COLLECTIN' CHARITY.

THAT WAS A *PUSHER*, DIG? ONE WHO'S CIRCULATIN' SOME BAD HITS. MY LITTLE BROTHER RAY NEARLY DIED FROM TAKIN' HIS DOPE!

WE WERE JUST OUT FOR A LITTLE JUSTICE IS ALL.

MAYHAP THE LAD'S WORDS RING WITH SINCERITY!

HAND ME THY BLADES.

WE BETTER DO WHAT THE MAN SEZ, JIMMY.

TAKING THE LAW INTO THINE OWN HANDS WILL NOT SERVE YE, IF THERE BE AN INJUSTICE HERE--

SNIK

--THOR SHALL STRIVE TO SET IT A'RIGHT.

AS FOR YE, RETURN TO THY HOMES AND FAMILIES.

WHAT CLOUD DID *HE* FALL OUTTA?

PERHAPS YE CAN TEACH THY LOVED ONES NE'ER TO PATRONIZE MERCHANTS OF BODILY POISON!

TRUE TO HIS WORD, THOR SEARCHES THE STREETS FOR THE DRUG PUSHER BUT...

VANISHED! 'TWOULD SEEM I CANNOT MAKE GOOD MY VOW TO THE YOUTHS THIS NIGHT. PERHAPS ON THE MORROW.

ESQUIRE HOTEL

NOW 'TIS TIME I DID RETURN TO MY TEMPORARY LODGINGS--

--AND ALLOW MY MORTAL FORM SOME MUCH-NEEDED REST. TOMORROW IS AN AUSPICIOUS DAY FOR HIM, AND HE WILL NEED HIS SLUMBER.

STAMPING HIS MYSTIC HAMMER MJOLNIR ONCE ON THE FLOOR...

...THE GOD OF THUNDER IS MAGICALLY TRANSFORMED INTO THE LAME DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE...

...HIS HAMMER ASSUMING THE SHAPE OF A WALKING STICK.

I'D BETTER SHUT THIS WINDOW. WHILE THOR MAY BE IMPERVIOUS TO THE COLD, I'M NOT. IT WOULDN'T DO TO START MY FIRST DAY OF WORK AS A DOCTOR SPREADING COLD GERMS!

THIRTY MILES NORTH, IN THE OPEN COUNTRY, GREAT GUSTS OF WIND PILE SNOW DRIFTS UPON A MODEST FARMHOUSE AND ITS DEMOLISHED BARN.

THE FARM BELONGS TO ONE MRS. BEVERLY MATHESON, MOTHER OF ONE, RECENTLY WIDOWED.

SINCE THE BARN WAS MYSTERIOUSLY DESTROYED ONE NIGHT LAST SUMMER, MRS. MATHESON HAS NOT VENTURED NEAR IT.

BUT WERE SHE TO LOOK BENEATH WHERE IT STOOD--

--SHE WOULD BE ASTONISHED TO DISCOVER THE ABANDONED LAIR OF THE MASTER ROBOT-MAKER... MACHINESMITH.*

*DEFEATED IN THE PAGES OF CAPTAIN AMERICA #249--J.S.

THE WORKSHOP IS IN RUINS NOW, THE ROBOTS ALL DESTROYED...

...ALL SAVE ONE OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL CONSTRUCTION, WHOSE EYES HAVE JUST BEGUN TO GLOW WITH THE LIGHT OF REBIRTH.

I AM... GABRIEL THE AIR-WALKER, HERALD OF GREAT GALACTUS, THE WORLD-EATER. WHERE AM I? WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

"I REMEMBER COMING TO THE PLANET EARTH TO TRUMPET THE IMMINENT RETURN OF MY BELOVED MASTER.

"I RECALL CONFRONTING GALACTUS' TREACHEROUS FORMER HERALD THE SILVER SURFER...

"I SEE MYSELF AS THE SURFER RENDS MY LIFE-SUSTAINING COSMIC CLOAK.

"I SEE MYSELF FALLING TO THE PAVEMENT. I FEEL MY BODY SHATTERING INTO FRAGMENTS.

"I SEE BLACKNESS.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? HOW COULD I HAVE BROKEN INTO PIECES LIKE...LIKE AN AUTOMATON--A MERE MECHANISM IN THE FORM OF A MAN?

I *AM* A MAN--A LIVING BEING OF FLESH AND BLOOD, WITH THE POWER COSMIC WHICH GALACTUS BESTOWED UPON ME. OR--OR AM I?

NO! I HAVE CHANGED. I SENSE IT. I AM NOW INDEED A MACHINE!

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN? WHO DID THIS TO ME? COULD THE ACCURSED SURFER HAVE TURNED ME INTO A ROBOT? JUST HOW POWERFUL DID GALACTUS MAKE HIS FIRST HERALD?

THAT MUST BE IT! THE SURFER TURNED ME INTO A ROBOT IN ORDER TO DEFEAT ME!

BUT WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT AFTER MY DEFEAT, GALACTUS ABANDONED ME. SOME EARTH BEING MUST HAVE FOUND ME AND BROUGHT ME TO THIS ROBOT FACTORY!

THIS UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR MUST HAVE MANAGED TO ACTIVATE SOME SORT OF AUTOMATIC REPAIR CIRCUIT. AND NOW AT LONG LAST I AM FULLY FUNCTIONAL!

I SHALL RE-IGNITE MY COSMIC CLOAK!

A MANTLE OF COSMIC FLAME ERUPTS FROM THE AIR-WALKER'S SHOULDERS--

--SENDING A GHOSTLY GLOW FROM THE BARN INTO THE WINTER NIGHT.

IN THE FARMHOUSE, YOUNG KEVIN MATHESON AWAKES...

OH, WOW. WHAT'S THAT WEIRD LIGHT COMING FROM THE OLD BARN?

I BETTER GO SEE. IT MIGHT BE A FIRE OR SOMETHING.

MOMMA WOULD GET REAL MAD IF SHE KNEW I WENT NEAR THE BARN--

--BUT I JUST WANNA SEE WHAT THE BRIGHT LIGHT IS.

WHEN KEVIN MATHESON WAS STILL TOO YOUNG TO WALK, HIS FATHER USED TO CARRY HIM THROUGH THE CORNFIELDS AT NIGHT, POINTING OUT THE MOON, THE STARS, THE PLANETS. AMONG THE FIRST WORDS HE SPOKE WERE "MOON," "BIG DIPPER," "ORION." WHEN HE WAS BUT FOUR HE SAW **STAR WARS** FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND SOON THE WORDS "ROBOT" AND "ALIEN" AND "SPACE" WERE PART OF HIS VOCABULARY. HE WAS RAISED ON **STAR TREK** RERUNS. HIS BEST FRIENDS WERE STAR WARS ACTION FIGURES. HIS FATHER DIED THE NIGHT **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA** WENT OFF THE AIR.

BECAUSE OF THIS FANTASY ORIENTATION, WHAT HE SEES BURST FROM THE BARN THIS COLD DECEMBER EVE DOES NOT FRIGHTEN HIM. IT DAZZLES AND EXCITES!

I WALK THE AIR ONCE MORE. GABRIEL HAS RISEN.

WHAT IS THIS? A WITNESS-- A HUMAN CHILD.

YOU'RE AN ALIEN, AREN'T YOU, MISTER? WHAT PLANET ARE YOU FROM? WHERE'S YOUR STARSHIP?

I AM GABRIEL THE AIR-WALKER.

DO YOU KNOW LUKE SKYWALKER?

NO. TELL ME, WHERE PRECISELY ON EARTH IS THIS?

DON'T YOU KNOW? YOU'RE ON MY MOM'S FARM. WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE BARN, MISTER?

RESTING.

WHO ARE YOU, CHILD? WHY DO YOU NOT FEAR ME AS THE REST OF YOUR KIND?

MY NAME'S KEVIN. I ONLY GET SCARED OF BAD ALIENS LIKE DARTH VADER.

YOU LOOK LIKE A GOOD ALIEN. I'D LIKE TO BE YOUR FRIEND.

WILL YOU FLY ME ALONG WITH YOU?

THE HUMAN MAY BE OF SOME USE TO ME IN INTERPRETING THE WAYS OF THIS ENIGMATIC WORLD.

YES, YOU MAY COME WITH ME.

OBOY!

AS GABRIEL AND KEVIN LIFT INTO THE WINTER SKY, THE BRILLIANCE OF THE ROBOT'S COSMIC CLOAK PENETRATES BEVERLY MATHESON'S BEDROOM WINDOW...

OHHH... MORNING ALREADY?

OH, MY LORD!

KEVIN! COME BACK!

BUT THE TWO FIGURES RECEDE FROM VIEW, UNTIL THEY ARE NO LARGER THAN THE SNOWFLAKES THAT FALL.

THE NEXT MORNING IN NEW YORK CITY, THE BLIZZARD CONTINUES AS DR. DONALD BLAKE LIMPS TO THE WESTSIDE MEDICAL CENTER ON BROADWAY AND 99th...

WELL, THIS IS IT! THE PLACE WHERE I'LL BE SPENDING MANY OF MY WAKING HOURS FROM NOW ON.

SOON, INSIDE THE CONVERTED BROWN-STONE, BLAKE IS MET BY HIS EMPLOYER, LIONEL JEFFRIES...

BLAKE, THESE ARE THE CLINIC'S OTHER FULL-TIME STAFFERS... RAMON HERNANDEZ... THERESA CRUZ... AND DEXTER QUENTIN.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU, CALL ME DON.

LET'S GO TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM. I'LL BRIEF YOU ON PROCEDURES.

THIS IS MOSTLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF DR. BLAKE. THE REST OF YOU WILL JUST HAVE TO BEAR WITH ME. LET'S DISCUSS WORK SCHEDULES...

I HEAR THAT BLAKE WAS ONCE A HIGH-PRICED SURGEON. WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO BRING HIM DOWN TO THIS?

FOLLOWING THE MEETING...

THIS IS THE EXAMINATION AREA YOU WILL BE SHARING WITH DR. QUENTIN.

A BIT SMALL, I KNOW. BUT YOU'LL BE MOVING AROUND A LOT DURING THE DAY ANYWAY.

THIS IS QUITE A CHANGE FROM THE PRIVATE OFFICE I HAD ON PARK AVENUE.

NOT QUITE WHAT YOU'RE ACCUSTOMED TO, EH, BLAKE?

IT'S FINE, SIR.

NOT LONG AFTER SETTLING IN...

DR. BLAKE, HERE'S YOUR FIRST PATIENT.

HEY, NURSE-- I WANTED TA SEE DOC QUENTIN. DAG, I DIDN'T EXPECT NO HONKY DOCTOR HERE.

I'M AFRAID YOU GET WHOEVER'S AVAILABLE, SONNY.

TYRONE OWLSLEY, IS IT? WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE?

DOC, LISSEN. I- I GOT THE SHAKES REAL BAD. I THINK I'VE BEEN DOIN' SOME BAD STUFF.

YOU GOTTA GIVE ME SOMETHIN' TA BRING ME DOWN. DOC QUENTIN WOULD.

HMMM, IT LOOKS LIKE THE *CASES* I'LL BE GETTING ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM PARK AVENUE, TOO.

AND WHILE DON BLAKE LEARNS A NEW STYLE OF MEDICAL PRACTICE, THE AWESOME AIR-WALKER AND HIS YOUNG COMPANION LEARN THE WHEREABOUTS OF NEW YORK CITY AFTER A NIGHT OF FRUITLESS SEARCHING...

I FIND YOUR WORLD MOST DISORIENTING, KEVIN--AS I FIND ALL ALIEN WORLDS.

I AM MUCH MORE AT HOME IN THE TRACKLESS VOID OF SPACE.

I THINK I LIKE OUTER SPACE BETTER, TOO, MR. GABRIEL, THOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE.

HOW STRANGE...I AM ACTUALLY GROWING TO ENJOY THIS EARTHLING'S COMPANY. CAN IT BE THAT GALACTUS' ABSENCE HAS LEFT AN EMPTINESS IN MY SOUL? IF SO, HOW CAN A SMALL HUMAN FILL IT?

IT WILL BE A PITY THAT WHEN MY MASTER MAKES GOOD HIS VOW TO DESTROY THIS PLANET, KEVIN MUST PERISH, TOO.

WHERE ARE WE GOING FIRST, MR. GABRIEL?

THAT BUILDING AHEAD LOOKS FAMILIAR. AS I RECALL, IT IS WHERE DWELL MY MASTER'S ENEMIES, THE *FANTASTIC FOUR.*

THE FF! WE'RE GOING TO VISIT THE FF!?!

WITH A GESTURE, I SHALL ENCASE THE EDIFICE WITHIN AN IMPENETRABLE BARRIER OF POLLUTANTS AND INERT GASES--HARDER THAN *STONE.*

INSIDE THE BAXTER BUILDING...

HEY, STRETCHO--WHAT IN BLAZES IS OUR SECURITY ALARM DOIN' BUZZIN' TA BEAT THE BAND? WE'RE UNDER ATTACK OR WHAT?

I DON'T KNOW, BEN. CHECK THE MONITORS.

REED, BEN--OUTSIDE THE WINDOW IS THAT *AIR-WALKER* ROBOT WE ONCE FOUGHT.* HE'S GOT SOME KID WITH HIM!

*FANTASTIC FOUR #123--J.S.

HEAR ME, HUMANS--I HAVE SEALED YOU WITHIN YOUR DWELLING TO PREVENT YOUR TRIFLING INTERFERENCE. I DESIRE INFORMATION.

WHY SHOULD WE GIVE YA THE TIME A' DAY, CREEP?

DON'T PROVOKE HIM, BEN. THE CHILD MUST BE A HOSTAGE!

WHAT HAS BECOME OF MY MASTER *GALACTUS?*

GALACTUS HAS BEEN DRIVEN FROM EARTH--SINCE WE LAST SAW YOU.

THAT IS INCONCEIVABLE--NONE OF YOU, NO ONE ON EARTH HAS THE POWER TO DEFEAT GALACTUS. HOW--?

UNLESS...THE ACCURSED SILVER SURFER CONSPIRED AGAINST HIM.

AND THE SURFER--WHERE MIGHT HE BE FOUND?

PRESUMABLY HE'S STILL ON EARTH. WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM HIM IN SOME TIME.

REED--KEEP HIM TALKING. I'LL SEE IF I CAN BURN THROUGH HIS BARRIER!

IT'S NO USE--MY FLAME JUST SNUFFS OUT!

AIR-WALKER--IF THAT LITTLE BOY IS HARMED, WE WILL MAKE YOU WISH YOU'D NEVER RETURNED. I SWEAR IT!

YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE THREATS, HUMAN. IT IS I WHO HAVE THE POSITION OF STRENGTH.

I ORDER YOU TO CONTACT THE SURFER. HE AND I HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE. IF I DO NOT MEET HIM WITHIN ONE HOUR, I SHALL OBLITERATE THE ENTIRE *CITY!*

STRIDING HAUGHTILY AWAY, OBLIVIOUS TO THE FF'S CRIES OF PROTEST...

GEE, MR. GABRIEL. YOU MUST BE AWFULLY STRONG TO LOCK UP THE THING AND THE TORCH. I'LL BET YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ANY-BODY!

YOU HAVE YET TO SEE THE TRUE SCOPE OF MY POWER, LITTLE ONE.

BEHOLD, KEVIN--AS I DEMONSTRATE MY MASTERY OF THE ATMOSPHERE!

I SHALL CAUSE A COSMIC WINDSTORM TO RAVAGE THE CITY. IF THE SURFER IS ANYWHERE NEAR, HE WILL RECOGNIZE SUCH A DISPLAY OF GALACTIC FORCE!

HOLY SMOKE! WHERE'D THAT WIND COME FROM ALLUVA SUDDEN?

IT--IT'S A HURRICANE!

OUTTA MY WAY--I'M DUCKING INDOORS!

PALACE

I.R.T.

MY FACE! THE WIND IS BURNING IT!

HAHAHAHA!

THEY RUN LIKE CRAVEN CATTLE!

FEEL THE STORM, KEVIN? AS SAVAGE AS IT IS, IT PALES WITH THE RAGE IN MY SOUL!

WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY, MR. GABRIEL?

WHY, KEVIN?

I RAGE BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN *ABANDONED* HERE ON EARTH--FORSAKEN BY THE BEING I LOVED LIKE A FATHER!

I RAGE BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN *TRANSFORMED* AGAINST MY WILL INTO A COLD, LIFELESS MACHINE!

I RAGE BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN *ROBBED* OF MY PURPOSE, MY MEANING, MY DESTINY!

I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU.

AND AS THE GENTLE YOUNG BOY TRIES TO COMFORT A TROUBLED FRIEND, A CERTAIN DOCTOR COMPLETES HIS FIRST DAY OF WORK...

THIS IS ODD. THE WAITING ROOM IS PACKED WITH PEOPLE, MOST OF WHOM DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'RE HERE FOR MEDICAL ATTENTION.

DR. BLAKE--I WOULDN'T GO OUTSIDE JUST YET. WEATHER SAYS WE'RE HAVING 180 MILE AN HOUR WINDS OUT THERE! THE RADIO WARNS EVERYONE TO STAY INDOORS AWAY FROM WINDOWS.

180 MILE AN HOUR WINDS--IN THE CITY?

IGNORING THE RECEPTIONIST'S WARNING, BLAKE GOES OUTSIDE, THROUGH THE PRIVATE REAR ENTRANCE...

BOXING

THESE WINDS JUST CAN'T BE NATURAL! I HAD BEST INVESTIGATE...AS *THOR!*

FOR A SINGLE SCINTILLATING INSTANT--

--A BOLT OF LIGHTNING PIERCES THE STORM--

--CHANGING THE LAME DOCTOR BLAKE TO--THE MIGHTY THOR!

NO STORM, HOWEVER POWERFUL, CAN DETER THOR THE *GOD OF STORMS!*

INTO THE MAELSTROM HE FLIES, DRAWN BY HIS WONDROUS WEAPON-- THE HAMMER CALLED MJOLNIR...

I MUST SEEK A VANTAGE POINT FAR ABOVE THE CITY STREETS.

THIS LOFTY SPIRE SHALL SUFFICE!

NOW BY STRIKING MY URU HAMMER TWICE ON ITS HANDLE--

--THE VERY FORCES OF NATURE SHALL BEND TO MY WILL!

THUMP THUMP

I COMMAND THEE, THOU RAGING TEMPEST! GIVE THY UNFETTERED FURY TO MINE ENCHANTED HAMMER!

FOR AS IT MAY CREATE SUCH TURBULENCE-- SO MAY MJOLNIR DISPENSE WITH IT.

BELOW...

HEY-- WHAT'S GOING ON? ONE MINUTE IT'S BLOWIN' LIKE A TORNADO-- THE NEXT IT'S AS CALM AS THE MOON!

THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN IN NEW JERSEY!

AH, IT'S PROB'LY JUST SOME CRUMMY NEW SUPER-JERK SHOWIN' OFF HIS POWERS!

THE EARTH-BOUND POPULACE ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES DISMAYED BY THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF WEATHER!

MR. GABRIEL-- HOW COME YOU STOPPED THE WIND?

IT WAS NOT MY DOING, KEVIN.

THERE MUST BE ONE WHOSE COMMAND OF THE ATMOSPHERE RIVALS MY OWN. BUT WHO? NOT EVEN THE SURFER POSSESSES SUCH POWER!

I BEHOLD THE APPROACH OF A FLYING FIGURE. IT IS NOT THE SURFER AS I SUSPECTED.

HOLD, STRANGER! I WOULD KNOW IF THOU WERT THE CAUSE OF THE STORM I QUELLED.

SO YOU ARE THE ONE. WHO ARE YOU, EARTHMAN?

I AM *THOR*, GOD OF THUNDER.

BAH! I SEEK THE SILVER SURFER-- NOT TO TRIFLE WITH DELUDED HUMANS POSING AS GODS! BEGONE!

NO--MR. GABRIEL--

I'VE HEARD OF HIM. HE'S A SUPER HERO! ONE OF THE STRONGEST!

WITH BUT A SINGLE CONCENTRATED BLAST OF *AIR* I HAVE DISPOSED OF THE SELF-STYLED GOD OF THUNDER!

HOWEVER, FLOORING THE ENRAGED ASGARDIAN AND KEEPING HIM THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS...

'TWOULD SEEM I HAVE FOUND THE STORM-BRINGER WHO ENDANGERED THE CITY!

I HAD BEST PROCEED WITH CAUTION THAT I MAY RESCUE HIS YOUNG HOSTAGE!

OH, NO! MR. AIR-WALKER'S BEEN HIT!

BTAM

IT WAS ENOUGH TO STAGGER HIM! HE HAS LOST CONTROL OF THE LAD!

FEAR NOT, YOUNG ONE--

--THOR SHALL SEE YOU COME TO NO HARM!

YOU SHALL BE SAFE HERE. REMAIN UNTIL I SUBDUE THE AIR-WALKER AND CAN RETURN THEE TO THY HOME.

THE BOY MUST BE CONFUSED! HE DOES NOT SEEM TO REALIZE THE DANGER!

GABRIEL HATH RECOVERED FROM MY BLOW--!

LET ME GO! GABRIEL IS MY *FRIEND!*

HAVE AT THEE, VILLAIN! 'TIS NO CHILD YOU MENACE NOW-- BUT ONE WHO IS MORE THAN YOUR EQUAL!

YOU ARE INDEED MORE POWERFUL THAN MOST OF YOUR KIND, HUMAN--

--BUT NO HUMAN IS THE EQUAL OF *GABRIEL* THE *AIR-WALKER*, HERALD OF GALACTUS!

I AM *NOT* A HUMAN, ARROGANT ONE--

KTANG

--I AM A GOD!

AND IF THOU ART A SERVITOR OF GALACTUS--

--THEN THY PURPOSES ARE MOST ASSUREDLY SINISTER!

MY PURPOSES ARE MY OWN, YELLOWHAIR. AND VANQUISHING YOU SHALL BE GOOD PRACTICE FOR MY IMMINENT BATTLE WITH MY TRUE FOE!

THE EARTHLING'S POWER SEEMS TO RESIDE IN THAT THROWING WEAPON. IF I CAN WIN IT FROM HIM, I WILL HAVE ANOTHER INSTRUMENT OF VENGEANCE TO USE AGAINST THE SURFER!

ARE YOU READY TO ADMIT DEFEAT YET, HUMAN--OR MUST YOU SUFFER FURTHER HUMILIATION AT MY HAND?

MY WRATH INCREASES WITH EACH DENIAL OF MY GODHOOD, AIR-WALKER!

LET THE MATCHLESS MIGHT OF MJOLNIR TEACH THEE THE ERROR OF THY WAYS!

I HAVE TAUNTED HIM INTO LETTING LOOSE HIS WEAPON!

HA! NOW IT IS I WHO HOLD THE HAMMER!

WHAT--?

THOOM

GABRIEL HATH CAUGHT MY HAMMER?!? BUT HOW--? THE ENCHANTMENT OF ALL-FATHER ODIN DECREES--

--NO LIVING BEING CAN LIFT MJOLNIR SAVE THOR! NOT EVEN GALACTUS' POWER CAN ALTER THAT!

THE HAMMER QUAKES IN MY GRASP LIKE IT WERE ALIVE! SOMETHING MUST COMPEL IT TO RETURN TO MY FOE'S HAND!

BUT BY GALACTUS' HUNGER, I SHALL PREVENT IT! I...SHALL... NOT...LET...GO!

HOWEVER...

TO ME, MIGHTY MJOLNIR!

I-I CANNOT HALT IT. IT'S PULLING ME TOWARD HIM!

HE HATH NOT OVERCOME THE ENCHANTMENT AFTER ALL! BUT WHAT MANNER OF BEING COULD HAVE EVEN *DETAINED* IT?

THOUGH I COULD NOT THWART YOUR HAMMER'S RETURN, THOR--

--I SHALL NOW WREST IT FROM YOU BEFORE IT CAN BE THROWN AGAIN!

SO BE IT! YOU SHALL NOT FIND THOR LACKING!

UGH! YOUR CLOAK WRAPS ABOUT MY FACE-- STEALING MY BREATH!

AND ALLOWING THE CHANCE TO STEAL YOUR HAMMER AS WELL...

...WITH WHICH I SHALL PUT AN END TO THIS CONTEST BY DEFEATING YOU.

KTHUK

HE IS INSENSATE BUT STILL ALIVE. STARS, THIS HUMAN IS OF STURDY BREED. I AM HALF-TEMPTED TO BELIEVE HIS CLAIMS OF GRANDEUR!

PERHAPS UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES WE COULD HAVE BEEN ALLIES IN MY COMING BATTLE... WHAT A PITY ONE OF SUCH POWER--

--MUST *DIE!* AND WITH A SENSE OF SUPREME IRONY-- I'LL USE HIS OWN WEAPON TO SLAY HIM.

FAREWELL, EARTHLING!

AT THAT INSTANT, A SMALL VOICE STRAINS TO BE HEARD BY THE VICTORIOUS AIR-WALKER...

MR. GABRIEL! IT'S ME--KEVIN! DON'T DO IT!

DON'T HURT HIM! ONLY BAD ALIENS KILL PEOPLE!

WHAT--THE CHILD, PLEADING FOR THE HUMAN'S LIFE. HOW EASY TO TURN AND IGNORE HIS PITIABLE CRIES-- AND YET I MUST NOT...

...FOR EVEN THE GREAT GALACTUS HAS KNOWN THE NEED FOR LESSER BEINGS SUCH AS MYSELF TO AID HIM IN HIS AWESOME STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL. SURELY, I AM NO DIFFERENT.

VERY WELL, KEVIN.

HE SHALL LIVE!

NOW, COME, I SHALL SAVE MY WRATH FOR THE TRUE ENEMY, THE SILVER SURFER!

KRUMF

UNNNH. WHAT-- HAS OCCURRED?

'TWAS *GABRIEL*-- STRIKING ME WITH MY MALLET. WHAT MANNER OF LIVING BEING IS HE TO WIELD MJOLNIR -- UNLESS...

...HE IS NOT ALIVE, BUT MIMICS SENTIENCE IN SOME SINISTER WAY!

HOLD, VILLAIN! 'TWAS THROUGH TREACHERY THOU BESTED ME!

THOR? RECOVERED SO SOON?

AND THIS TIME NAUGHT SHALL STAY MY HAND, FOR 'TIS NOT A CREATURE OF FLESH AND BLOOD I BATTLE--

--BUT A SOULLESS SHELL... A MOCKERY OF GOD AND MAN ALIKE. NOW THERE SHALL BE AN END TO YOU, EVIL ONE-- AN *END!*

KRRRUNTH

G-GABRIEL--?!?

I WAS NOT DECEIVED. THE AIR-WALKER WAS BUT AN UNLIVING MACHINE IN THE GUISE OF A MAN!

IT SHALL BE SIMPLE TO POSITION MYSELF TO CATCH THE CHILD.

GABRIEL STARES WITH DISBELIEF AT THE GAPING HOLE IN HIS CHEST AS HIS FIRE-CLOAK BEGINS TO FLICKER...

THEN OBLIVION CLAIMS HIM.

FEAR NOT, SMALL ONE. I HAVE THEE ONCE AGAIN!

MR. GABRIEL-- *MR. GABRIEL!* WHAT DID HE DO TO YOU?

WHAT--? THE CHILD RUNS TO HIS ABDUCTOR!

HE'S *DEAD!* JUST LIKE DADDY.

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO KILL HIM, THOR? HE WASN'T A BAD ALIEN.

HE WAS MY FRIEND.

NOW HE'S DEAD AND YOU KILLED HIM! *I HATE YOU, THOR!*

GET AWAY FROM ME!

'TWOULD SEEM THAT ONCE AGAIN THINGS WERE NOT AS THEY APPEARED.

WHO WOULD HAVE SUSPECTED THAT AN ALIEN ROBOT WOULD HAVE THE AFFECTION OF A CHILD?

I CAN DO NO MORE HERE. PERHAPS I HAVE ALREADY DONE...TOO MUCH.

NEXT: TO AVENGE A FALLEN FRIEND!

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS™

THE SORCERESS AND THE SACRIFICE!

DEEP WITHIN THE CAVERN-KINGDOM OF **NORNHELM**, ITS EVIL RULER VIEWS A FARAWAY SCENE IN **ASGARD**. SHE SMILES, PLEASED BY WHAT IS SEEN... WEARING THE LOOK OF A PREDATOR SECONDS FROM DEVOURING ITS PREY.

THERE, **QUEEN KARNILLA**, MY SPELLS HAVE FOCUSED ON THY BELOVED BALDER, WANDERING AMIDST A MARKETPLACE... AS WE INTENDED.

AYE, **HAAG**, MY "BELOVED" BALDER -- WHO FOR YEARS SPURNED MINE OFFERINGS OF LOVE BECAUSE HE BELIEVES I AM NOT VIRTUOUS ENOUGH TO BE HIS.

WHEN LAST WE MET, I DID ALMOST SLAY HIM FOR HIS CALLOUS REJECTION, THOUGH IN THE END MY HEART WOULD NOT PERMIT IT. STILL, I SWORE THAT BY WHATE'ER MEANS NECESSARY, I WOULD *YET* MAKE THE BRAVE FOOL MY MATE.*

NOW, THROUGH OUR SORCEROUS INTERFERENCE, BALDER WILL MAKE AN ACQUAINTANCE... ONE WHICH SHALL INSURE THE SUCCESS OF MY PLAN TO ENSNARE HIM.

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*LAST ISSUE. -- J. S.

WITH THE SIMPLEST OF SPELLS-- LET THE TRAP BE SPRUNG.

HOW STRANGE...THOUGH I AM STOCKED FULL OF PRODUCE, I FELT ALMOST COMPELLED TO COME TO THE MARKET THIS DAY.

OH! THE HANDLE ON MY BASKET HAS BROKEN. MY PARDON, SIR.

I AM *BALDER*. ALLOW ME TO AID THEE, MILADY--?

NANNA.

ONE SO YOUNG AND LOVELY SHOULD NE'ER BE SLAVE TO SUCH CHORES.

THOU SPEAK KINDLY. WILL THOU WALK WITH ME AWHILE... BALDER?

'TWOULD TAKE A ROYAL DECREE TO PREVENT IT, MILADY.

AND A SHORT WHILE AFTER LEAVING THE CROWDED MARKETPLACE...

THIS IS MY DWELLING. MAY I PRESUME 'PON THEE TO JOIN ME INSIDE FOR A MEAL?

I WOULD BE HONORED, FAIR ONE.

THOUGH MEETING BUT MOMENTS AGO, THEY GAZE INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES AND KNOW STIRRINGS OF PASSION BEYOND ANY THEY HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED. THE WEEKS FOLLOW IN A TIMELESS BLUR. THE TWO IMMORTALS BECOME INSEPARABLE.

THEY ARE IN LOVE. AND ALL ASGARD REJOICES IN THE SIGHT OF THE ONCE MELANCHOLY BALDER-- REVITALIZED.

WHILE IN THE DOMAIN OF KARNILLA...

ALL GOES AS EXPECTED, MY QUEEN. BALDER'S "CHANCE" MEETING WITH NANNA--WHICH WE ARRANGED, DID SET THE STAGE FOR HIS GROWING INFATUATION WITH HER. HE TRULY CARES FOR HER NOW, AS HE DOES FOR NO OTHER WOMAN.

THUS, I MAY USE THOSE DEEP FEELINGS TO MINE ADVANTAGE. THOUGH BALDER IS BEYOND MY WOOING... HE IS ***NOT*** BEYOND MY WINNING.

HEE HEE HEEEE! AYE, KARNILLA.

NOW BY THE POWER OF **NORNHELM** WHICH IS MINE TO COMMAND...LET A MYSTIC SPELL OF TRANSFERENCE CARRY THEM TO THIS LAND!

BALDER! WHAT HAS HAPPENED? WHERE ARE WE? INSTANTS AGO, WE STOOD TALKING IN ASGARD...NOW--NOW WE ARE HERE!?

STAND FAST, MILADY. THIS HELLISH TERRAIN HATH AN EERIE FAMILIARITY TO ME. I HAVE JOURNEYED HERE BEFORE.

THIS IS NORNHELM, KINGDOM OF THE SORCERESS--***KARNILLA!*** IT MUST HAVE BEEN THROUGH HER MAGICKS WE WERE BROUGHT HERE.

THE NORN QUEEN!

BUT WHY, MY BELOVED?

I KNOW NOT. NOR SHALL WE STAY TO SEEK HER DEVIOUS MOTIVES. COME...

...WE SHALL RETURN TO ASGARD THROUGH THE FOREST OF THORNS, AND REPORT THIS TO ALMIGHTY ODIN.

OH! BALDER--I HAVE FALLEN IN A BOG! HELP ME, BELOVED!

EH? NANNA-- SINKING IN THE SWAMP!

DON'T STRUGGLE, MY LOVE. 'TWILL BUT DRAG THEE DOWN MORE QUICKLY. I HAVE THEE NOW.

BALDER... WILL WE E'ER AGAIN SEE THE SPIRES OF ASGARD, OR WILL WE DIE ON THIS BLEAK LANDSCAPE WITHOUT E'EN KNOWING WHY?

NAY, MILADY. WE SHALL SURVIVE. I SWEAR THIS TO THEE.

FOR WHAT SEEMS LIKE HOURS, THEY TRAVERSE THE FOREBODING NORNHELM, SKIRTING ITS PERILS-- DRIVEN BY AN UNSWERVING URGE TO RETURN HOME.

TAKE HEART, NANNA. JUST AHEAD, 'ROUND THIS ROCKY OUTCROPPING LIES THE OUTER LIMITS OF NORNHELM. I AM CERTAIN WE ARE BUT MOMENTS FROM FREEDOM.

BUT WHEN THE PAIR HAS PASSED BEYOND WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS THE FINAL OBSTRUCTION, THE MOST REPULSIVE SIGHT OF ALL AWAITS THEM... A GROTESQUE CAVE ENTRANCE-- EMANATING A SENSE OF UNSPEAKABLE EVIL.

MILORD-- THAT AWFUL CAVE... MUST WE TRAVEL THROUGH IT TO FLEE?

NAY, NANNA. I SEE NOW WE HAVE BEEN TOYED WITH-- FED ILLUSIONS TO MAKE US BELIEVE WE WERE ON THE PROPER PATH TO ASGARD, WHEN, IN FACT WE HAVE BLINDLY WANDERED INTO THE VERY *HEART* OF THIS SHUNNED REALM.

AND THAT SINISTER STRUCTURE BEFORE US IS THE ENTRANCEWAY INTO THE LAIR OF THE MISTRESS OF MALICE--

--KARNILLA!

KARNILLA...WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS ABDUCTION? HAVE YOU NOT YET UNDERSTOOD OUR TIME TOGETHER IS OVER? WHATE'ER FEELINGS I ONCE HAD FOR THEE ARE NO MORE. THERE IS NOTHING BETWEEN US ANY LONGER.

NOT E'EN SO MUCH AS A WORD OF GREETING FOR ME, BALDER? HAVE THY MANNERS FLED WITH THY GOOD SENSE?

THERE *IS* SOMETHING BETWEEN US, MY BRASH ONE... SOMETHING THAT WILL FINALLY UNITE US IN WEDLOCK:

YOUR LOVER, NANNA--

-- WHO IS NOW MY PRISONER TO PREVENT ANY PREMATURE DEPARTURE.

SNAPT

CALM THYSELF, CHILD. YOUR SAFETY AND FREEDOM WILL BE QUICKLY ASSURED... WHEN BALDER HAS CHOSEN TO BECOME MY HUSBAND.

NAY, KARNILLA! NEVER WILL I CONSENT TO BE THY BRIDEGROOM. I WOULD SOONER SPEND ETERNITY IN A SERPENT'S PIT.

VERY WELL, THEN, NANNA WILL DIE.

I FEAR NOT DEATH. GLADLY WILL I SACRIFICE MYSELF THAT THOU NOT BE BOUND TO THE NORN QUEEN.

I...I CANNOT. MY LOVE FOR THEE IS TOO GREAT. ALL THAT I ASK IN RETURN FOR MY CONSENT, KARNILLA, IS THAT NANNA BE RETURNED TO ASGARD SAFE...

...AND AT NO TIME THENCEFORTH SHALL HARM BEFALL HER BECAUSE OF THEE.

AGREED. I DO SWEAR, BALDER...IF IN ANY MANNER I BRING ABOUT YOUR BELOVED'S INJURY OR DEATH-- OUR MARRIAGE IS DISSOLVED.

THEN, WITH THAT PROMISE, WITCH QUEEN... I AM THINE.

AYE, BRAVE ONE. THOU ART MINE AT LONG LAST. NOW AND FOREVERMORE--

--THOU ART MINE!

NEXT: THE WEDDING OF BALDER!

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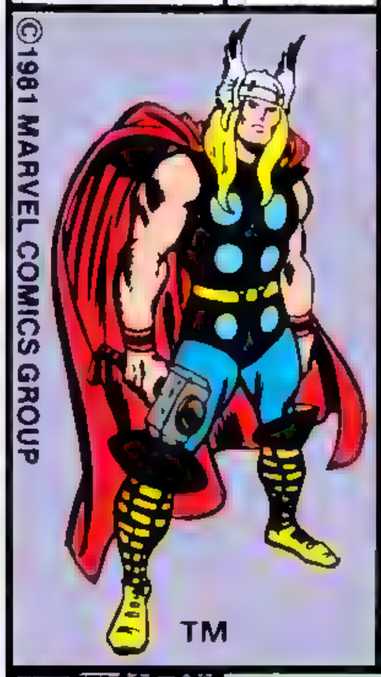

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

FIRELORD'S FINAL BATTLE!

pollard

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR—and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning—and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO — WRITERS | KEITH POLLARD — LAYOUT ARTIST | STONE, SIMONS GIACOIA, SEVERIN — FINISHED ART | JOE ROSEN — LETTERS | GEORGE ROUSSOS — COLORS | JIM SALICRUP — EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER — EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FURY OF THE FIRELORD!

SAUDI ARABIA: A LAND OF STARK CONTRASTS, WHERE EVEN A PRIMITIVE NOMADIC TRIBE MAY POSSESS A BATTERY-POWERED EXAMPLE OF THE WESTERN TECHNOLOGY WHICH HAS ENTERED THEIR SIMPLE LIVES SINCE THAT COUNTRY BECAME A MAJOR PETROLEUM PRODUCER...

QUICKLY, FASUL. SUMMON THE *DJINN.** IT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO HIM TO LEARN WE ARE WATCHING A BROTHER SPIRIT OF THE LIVING FLAME.

* A NATIVE FIRE-SPIRIT. --JIM.

TOO LONG HAVE I DWELLED ON THESE HARSH SANDS, WORSHIPPED LIKE SOME NATIVE DEITY.

IN TRUTH, I AM A BEING OF THE DISTANT STARS, YET I HAVE CHOSEN TO REMAIN ON EARTH. SOMETHING ***BEYOND*** MY KNOWLEDGE KEEPS ME HERE...AND I HAVE YET TO DISCOVER WHAT.

MIGHTY ONE! FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION ON YOUR SUBLIME MEDITATIONS, BUT IF YOU WILL COME WITH ME, I WILL SHOW YOU SOMETHING OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.

YOU SEE, YOUR SERVANT SPOKE THE TRUTH.

<THOR IS BATTLING HIS FOE THE AIR-WALKER THROUGH NEW YORK CITY'S STREETS, AS THOUSANDS OF STUNNED PEDESTRIANS VIEW THE EPIC CONFLICT.>

BY THE NINE NEBULAS! IT IS ***HIM!***

WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THE FIERY FIGURE STREAKS INTO THE MIDDAY SKY, LEAVING BEHIND A PERPLEXED GROUP OF WORSHIPPERS.

WE HAVE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY, MIGHT ONE. WILL YOU NOT TELL US WHY YOU LEAVE?

HE DID NOT SPEAK BEFORE HE LEFT. HAVE WE WORSHIPPED THIS GOD ***WELL*** ENOUGH, HARIB?

PERHAPS, FASIL, THAT IS OUR PROBLEM. WE HAVE WORSHIPPED THIS GOD ***TOO*** WELL... FAR TOO WELL.

DESPITE THE ALIEN'S BLINDING SPEED, THE STRUGGLE IN MANHATTAN IS OVER BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL. AND IN THIS INSTANCE, TO THE VICTORS WENT SOMETHING LESS THAN THE SPOILS.

Y-YOU KILLED HIM, THOR. HE WAS MY FRIEND AND YOU KILLED HIM. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU!*

*LAST ISSUE, THE AIR-WALKER WAS BEFRIENDED BY THE YOUNG BOY ON A FARM IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. --J.S.

DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD, THOR. YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO. IN THIS LINE OF WORK, SOMEONE *ALWAYS* GETS HURT-- ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

'TIS TRUE, OFFICER. BUT TO SUFFER THE ENMITY OF ONE SO YOUNG IS NEW TO ME. I LIKE IT NOT.

STAND BACK, LADY. THIS BARRIER'S HERE FOR A REASON.

BUT THAT'S MY *SON*. PLEASE--YOU MUST LET ME THROUGH.

OH, KEVIN--*KEVIN!* I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN. WHEN THAT HORRIBLE CREATURE CARRIED YOU AWAY INTO THE SKY-- OH, MY BABY!

DON'T WORRY, MOM. HE WASN'T GONNA HURT ME. THOR'S THE BAD GUY.

HUSH, KEVIN. THOR SAVED YOUR LIFE.

OKAY, THE MAYOR WANTS YOU TO TAKE TEMPORARY CHARGE OF THIS CHARACTER, THOR. CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

I SHALL REMOVE HIM IMMEDIATELY TO THE AVENGERS MANSION FOR EXAMINATION.

HEY, GOLDILOCKS. LOOKS LIKE THE HUMAN TORCH'S COMIN' IN FOR A VISIT. MAYBE THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* WANT A LOOK AT THIS BOZO, TOO.

BUT THE DRAMATIC FIGURE WHICH DROPS EARTHWARD IS MEMBER OF NO SUPER HERO GROUP...IS NOT EVEN OF THE HUMAN RACE. THOUGH HE IS KNOWN BY MANY NAMES ON MYRIAD WORLDS, THE ONE HE PRIZES MOST IS --

--THE FIRELORD!

GABRIEL! I HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE... YOU HAVE PERISHED AT THE HANDS OF THOR.

FIRELORD, MY FRIEND. 'TIS GOOD TO SEE THEE.

I HAVE NO WORDS OF GREETING FOR YOU, ASGARDIAN, FOR YOU HAVE SLAIN ONE I VALUED ABOVE ALL OTHERS.

REST EASY, FALLEN COMRADE, YOU SHALL BE AVENGED!

ONCE I CALLED YOU FRIEND, THUNDER GOD, BUT NO LONGER! WHATEVER BOND EXISTED BETWEEN US IS BROKEN! NOW YOU ARE THE ENEMY--

--AND YOU'LL PAY IN FULL FOR YOUR CRIME!

KA-POOSH!

FWOOOSH!

WHAT COULD HAVE OCCURRED TO THUS CHANGE FIRELORD? HE STRIKES AS IF HE REMEMBERS NOT THE ADVENTURES WE SHARED IN THE PAST.*

*THOR FIRST ENCOUNTERED FIRELORD WHEN HE WAS HERALD TO THE WORLD-DEVOURING **GALACTUS**-- A GIANT WHO CONSUMES PLANETARY ENERGY TO SURVIVE. SINCE RELINQUISHING THAT ROLE, FIRELORD HAS REMAINED ON EARTH AND MET THOR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. -- J.S.

I DON'T RELISH THIS COMBAT, THOR, AS I DO MOST. IF I COULD--I WOULD SPARE YOU. BUT LOYALTY TO THE DEAD TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ALL. AND SO--

--YOU MUST DIE!

BUT WHENE'ER WE HAVE STRUGGLED IN THE PAST-- NEVER HAVE YOU MADE MENTION OF THE AIR-WALKER.

MY MEMORY OF HIM MUST HAVE BEEN ***SUPPRESSED*** BY THE GREAT GALACTUS. BUT ONCE I HAD VIEWED HIM AGAIN-- THE PIECES ALL FELL BACK INTO PLACE.

THE HEAT-- SAPPING MY STRENGTH. I MUST STOP IT NOW!

MOVING SWIFTLY, THOR STAMPS HIS MIRACULOUS MALLET TWICE UPON THE GROUND, CALLING UPON HIS MASTERY OF THE ELEMENTS-- AND CREATING A TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR.

THAMP THAMP

YOU'RE RESOURCEFUL, THOR. I APPLAUD THAT IN A FOE.

BUT MINE IS NOT THE PALTRY FLAMES BORN ON EARTH. MINE IS THE FIRE BIRTHED IN THE RAGING HEART OF A MILLION SUNS-- AGAINST WHICH YOU ARE HELPLESS.

ULLGH! BUT... WHAT PURPOSE WILL MY DEATH SERVE?! URRGH!

IT WILL EASE MY CONSCIENCE... ASSUAGE THE GNAWING FRUSTRATION I HAVE INSIDE.

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO KNOW YOUR LIFE IS SLIPPING FROM YOU, IMMORTAL? *WHAT IS IT LIKE?*

MY--LIFE IS STILL--MINE...

...AND ONE SUCH AS YOU SHALL NEVER CLAIM IT!

SPAMMM!

BRAVE WORDS, MURDERER! BUT YOUR ACTIONS BELIE THEM. RATHER THAN FACE ME--YOU FLEE!

I MUST ENDURE THOSE TAUNTS TILL I MOVE THE BATTLE BEYOND THE CITY LIMITS... FOR IF THE MIGHT OF THE FIRELORD IS UNLEASHED IN SUCH A POPULOUS CENTER...

...E'EN THE RAMPAGE OF THE AIR-WALKER WOULD PALE IN COMPARISON.

HOLD YOUR FIRE, MEN. THOR'S NOT APT TO FLY OFF LIKE THAT WITHOUT A GOOD REASON. LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT I, TOO, HAVE THE POWER OF FLIGHT...THAT NO MATTER WHERE YOUR COWARDLY ESCAPE ROUTE MAY LEAD--

--THE FLAMES OF FIRELORD WILL FOLLOW!

FROOSH

THAT ASGARDIAN REMAINS AIRBORNE. HIS FORWARD MOMENTUM WAS TOO GREAT. BUT THERE IS YET ANOTHER TACTIC I MAY TRY.

YOU ARE MINE, THOR! HOW COULD YOU HOPE TO FLEE FROM ONE WHO HAS OUTDISTANCED FLASHING COMETS-- TOYED WITH METEOR SWARMS.

DOWN NOW, MURDERER. DOWN INTO THE WATERY DEPTHS THAT WILL BE YOUR GRAVE.

FLASH

THE UNEXPECTED DESCENT HAS CAUGHT HIM OFFGUARD. HE'S DISORIENTED...

...LEAVING ME THE PERFECT CHANCE TO STRIKE!

SWOK!

ZOUNDS! STILL HE PRESSES THE OFFENSE! TRULY IS THE FIERY ONE BERSERK! THERE BE NO CHOICE--

--THOR MUST RESPOND IN KIND!

PWOOM!

NOW, WHILE HE IS STUNNED, THERE BE TIME TO RE-CLAIM THE SURFACE --AND MY BREATH. THEN MAY I RETURN FOR HIM.

IT SURPASSES BELIEF! E'EN FULLY SUBMERGED IN WATER, HIS FLAME GLOWS AS STRONGLY AS IN AIR OR IN THE TRACKLESS VOID OF SPACE.

TRULY IS THE POWER COSMIC A THING OF WONDER... AND FIRELORD ITS UNDISPUTED MASTER.

EH? BEHIND ME--A SOUND... RUMBLING OF THE SHORE. IS IT THE FIERY ONE OR--

AS THE STARTLED ASGARDIAN TURNS, HE IS ENGULFED BY A STINGING COLUMN OF SAND GRANULES THAT CLING AS IF ALIVE.

DID YOU THINK THE CHANGE OF TERRAIN WOULD AID YOU, THUNDER GOD?

I HAVE TROD A THOUSAND WORLDS--EACH WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TURN TO MY ADVANTAGE WHEN NECESSARY.

AND A PLACID EARTH SHORE IS NO EXCEPTION.

HEIMDALL'S EYES! WITH HIS FIRESTAFF HE HAS MELTED AND FUSED THE SAND PARTICLES, ENCASING ME IN A PRISON OF THICKEST GLASS.

I DON'T EXPECT THAT TRANSPARENT SHELL TO HOLD YOU LONG, MURERER... JUST TIME ENOUGH FOR THE SEARING FLAMES OF MY FIRESTAFF TO INCINERATE YOU WHERE YOU STAND IMMOBILE.

THRICE HAVE I BEEN CALLED MURDERER...I THE SON OF ALMIGHTY ODIN--HEIR TO HIS GOLDEN THRONE. ENOW!

ENOW I SAY! I WEARY OF YOUR TAUNTS FIRELORD!

IF 'TIS BATTLE YOU SEEK--BATTLE YOU CRAVE--

THEN THE PRINCE OF ASGARD SHALL NOT DISAPPOINT THEE.!

HIS HAMMER-- IT SPINS MADLY ABOUT ME, CREATING A SWIRLING, POWER SAPPING VORTEX!

THE MALLET MUST BE INTERCEPTED IN ITS PATH BY THE MATCHLESS MIGHT OF MY FIRESTAFF!

HAVE AT THEE, VILLAIN!

I HAVE ENDURED MUCH FROM YOU, FIRELORD, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR ONCE FRIENDSHIP. BUT YOU HAVE O'ERSTEPPED THOSE BOUNDS--AND THAT SHALL BE TO THY EVER-LASTING REGRET.!

THE ONLY REGRET I HAVE HATED ONE, IS THAT IT IS GABRIEL WHO LIES DEAD--NOT *YOU*!

SPAK

THY WRATH IS MISPLACED. 'TWAS NO BEING OF FLESH AND BLOOD I DESTROYED, BUT A SOULLESS MACHINE... A MASS OF MERE CIRCUITS.

GABRIEL--
A MASS OF CIRCUITS--
A SOULLESS MACHINE?!
LIES.! ALL OF IT *LIES*.!

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO CONVINCE THEE? I DID BUT END THE RAMPAGE OF A *ROBOT*--WHO SPOKE OF THE RETURN OF THE MONSTROUS GALACTUS. I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE!

WHUNT

AS DO I, THUNDER GOD... AS DO I.

AND NOTHING YOU CAN SAY WILL CHANGE THAT.!

THEN WE FIGHT ON! THOUGH WHAT END THIS SENSELESS STRUGGLE SERVES REMAINS A MYSTERY EVEN YOU CANNOT EXPLAIN.

CAN IT BE ANY CLEARER? IT IS RETRIBUTION I SEEK! AND BE-FORE THIS IS THROUGH-- I SHALL HAVE IT!

'TIS STRANGE. WHEN I SPOKE OF GABRIEL, FIRELORD SEEMED TO HESITATE -- SLACKEN HIS ATTACK...

...ALMOST AS IF HE KNEW THAT WHAT I SPOKE WAS THE TRUTH, THOUGH HE DARED NOT ACCEPT IT. IF THAT IS SO, THEN THERE IS ONE WAY TO END THIS STALEMATE...

...BUT 'TWILL BE A MIGHTY GAMBLE... ONE WHICH COULD MEAN MY DEATH IF I AM IN ERROR.

HEAR ME, FIRELORD. I WEARY OF THE CONFLICT. LET THERE BE AN END TO IT. NOW.

YOU SEEK TO TRICK ME!

NAY! I SIMPLY CANNOT REASON WITH THEE, NOR CAN I DEFEAT THEE. THUS, LET VENGEANCE BE ***THINE***. SO BE IT!

PREPARE YOURSELF THEN, ASGARDIAN. PRAY TO WHATEVER DEITY AN IMMORTAL DOES...

...FOR YOU SHALL SOON STAND BEFORE HIM. NOW--

--NO. NO, I CANNOT. HOWEVER MUCH I MOURN THE SLAIN GABRIEL, I COULD NEVER PLAY EXECUTIONER WHEN I KNOW THAT YOU SPOKE TRUTHFULLY OF HIM.

I DID SUSPECT AS MUCH, MY FRIEND. THY TEMPERAMENT IS AS FIERY AS THY MANE. BUT THY HEART WERT EVER NOBLE AND FAIR... AND 'TWAS THERE I DID APPEAL.

YOUR FAITH BETRAYS ME, ASGARDIAN, AND IT SHALL NOT GO UNREWARDED. YOU ARE DESERVING OF AN ANSWER AS TO WHY I FOUGHT WITH YOU THIS DAY... WHY I ACTED LIKE ONE POSSESSED.

IN WHAT SEEMS LIKE AGES AGO, I WAS THE FIRST OFFICER ABOARD A ***XANDARIAN*** EXPLORER-SHIP, ASSIGNED TO PROBE THE FRINGES OF THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY... IT WAS A MISSION I RELISHED, FOR IT ALLOWED ME TO SERVE UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED ***COMMANDER GABRIEL***... A MAN WHOSE FAR-FLUNG EXPLOITS HAD INSPIRED ME TO JOIN THE SPACE SERVICE.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS AND PHILOSOPHY HAD SHAPED THE DIRECTION OF MY LIFE. I WANTED MOST TO PLEASE HIM--TO SHARE THE LONELY BURDENS OF COMMAND. BECAME CLOSE IN THE PROCESS.

"AND ONE DAY WE CAME UPON A MOST PECULIAR STARCRAFT.

FIRST OFFICER, I WANT A SENSOR SCAN OF THAT VESSEL.

RIGHT AWAY, CAPTAIN.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, ***PYREUS***? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY-THING THAT SIZE IN SEVEN YEARS IN DEEP SPACE.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT--

"BEFORE ANOTHER WORD PASSED MY LIPS, CAPTAIN GABRIEL VANISHED!"

THE CAPTAIN! HE'S GONE!

"OUR INSTRUMENTS INDICATED A TELEPORTATION BEAM FROM THAT ENORMOUS SHIP HAD SNATCHED HIM FROM US.

"AS RANKING OFFICER, I CALLED FOR BATTLE STATIONS, AND ORDERED OUR APPROACH TO THE UNKNOWN VESSEL.

"AS WE DREW NEARER, THE TRULY IMMENSE PROPORTIONS OF THE SHIP BECAME EVIDENT. I OPENED A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION, AND RECEIVED NO RESPONSE.

"SUDDENLY, AS WE DREW WITHIN THE SHADOW OF THE MONSTROUS SPHERE, IT SLIPPED INTO HYPERSPACE BEFORE WE COULD FIRE A SINGLE WEAPON.

"I VOWED THEN WE WOULD PURSUE THAT VESSEL TO THE ENDS OF THE UNIVERSE TO RECLAIM OUR BELOVED COMMANDER...AND IN THE PROCESS I WOULD PROVE MYSELF TO HIM I MOST ADMIRED.

"LATER, I LEARNED THAT MY CAPTAIN HAD BEEN TAKEN BY THE PLANET-DESTROYER... *GALACTUS*. HE HAD NEED OF A HERALD TO SELECT WORLDS TO RAVAGE FOR SUSTENANCE.

"GABRIEL PROTESTED HIS CAPTURE BUT THE GIANT OFFERED NO OTHER CHOICE.

I DESIRE ONE WITH YOUR TALENTS-- YOUR WANDERLUST...WHO IS AT HOME IN DEEPEST SPACE. *YOU* ARE THAT ONE, CAPTAIN GABRIEL. YOU SHALL SERVE ME.

I AM MERELY A MAN, GALACTUS, WITH NO SHIP, HOW MAY I DO YOUR BIDDING? WHAT YOU ASK IS BEYOND ME.

SOON YOU WILL BE *MORE* THAN MORTAL... *MORE* THAN YOU COULD EVER CONCEIVE.

NOW, BY MY HAND, YOU SHALL BE--

--*REBORN!*

"IN THAT INSTANT, CAPTAIN GABRIEL, WAS NO MORE THE POWER COSMIC FLOWED THROUGH HIS BEING... AND HE BECAME-- *THE AIR-WALKER!*

"WORLDS UNCOUNTABLE DID HE SELECT FOR THE GARGANTUAN ONE TO FEAST UPON. AND THOUGH GABRIEL FELT GUILT OVER THOSE WHO PERISHED THAT GALACTUS MIGHT LIVE...

'...HE CAME TO KNOW THE TRAGEDY OF THIS COSMIC BEING WHO WAS SLAVE TO HIS ENDLESS APPETITE. THIS TOUCHED GABRIEL EVEN MORE DEEPLY.

"THEY SPOKE OFTEN AND AT LENGTH. GALACTUS SEEMED TO CRAVE HIS COMPANIONSHIP...SENSE A KINDRED SPIRIT WHO MARVELLED AT THE MYSTERIES OF CREATION AS MUCH AS HE.

"AND THEN ONE DAY, AS THE AIR-WALKER RETURNED TO HIS MASTER'S SHIP AFTER A SCOUTING MISSION...

"...HE WAS *MURDERED* BY THE ATTACKING OVOIDS-- A RACE WHICH DARED FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE INVADING GALACTUS.

"BUT IN HIS WONDROUS WAY, GALACTUS SAW A SLIM CHANCE FOR THE AIR-WALKER'S SURVIVAL. AND SO TAKING THE SLAIN GABRIEL--

"--HE TRANSFERRED THE DWINDLING LIFE-SPARK INTO A PERFECT MECHANICAL REPLICA. AT LEAST *PART* OF WHAT GABRIEL WAS, WOULD LIVE AGAIN...

"AND THIS HELPED EASE THE GIANT'S PAIN AT THE LOSS OF HIS BELOVED HERALD.

"BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH. THUS, THE AIR-WALKER ROBOT WAS DISPATCHED TO EARTH TO DEMAND THE RETURN OF HIS MASTER'S FORMER HERALD-- ***THE SILVER SURFER***--

"--WHO WAS CONDEMNED TO THIS WORLD FOR HIS BETRAYAL OF GALACTUS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS GALACTUS SAW FIT TO RELEASE HIM.

"THE SURFER WAS RELUCTANT TO LEAVE, AND DESTROYED THE GABRIEL REPLICA IN COMBAT.*

* FANTASTIC FOUR #124. --J.S.

"GALACTUS LEFT EARTH WITHOUT RECLAIMING HIS LOST HERALD. FOR A TIME, HE SOUGHT SUSTENANCE ON HIS OWN, LEAVING THE DRIED HUSKS OF ONCE-VERDANT PLANETS IN HIS WAKE.

"AND ALL THE WHILE I PURSUED HIM AS THE NEW CAPTAIN OF A CERTAIN XANDARIAN STARSHIP...

"...WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT GALACTUS. WHEN OUR SENSORS INDICATED AN OPENING IN HIS DEFENSIVE SCREENS--

"--I TELEPORTED ABOARD."

I AM CAPTAIN PYREUS OF THE XANDARIAN EMPIRE, WHO SERVED AS FIRST OFFICER UNDER COMMANDER GABRIEL--UNTIL HE WAS ABDUCTED BY YOU--PARASITE. NOW I DEMAND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM-- AND HIS IMMEDIATE RETURN, OR FACE THE MIGHT OF XANDAR.

GALACTUS IS IMPRESSED WITH YOUR DETERMINATION AND COURAGE IN SEEKING HIM OUT. GABRIEL MUST HAVE MEANT MUCH TO YOU... AS HE DID TO ME.

LET ME OFFER THIS... IF YOU WILL AGREE TO BE MY HERALD FOR A TIME, I SHALL REVEAL ALL THAT OCCURRED TO HIM SINCE HE BECAME MINE

FOR THE SAKE OF MY CAPTAIN-- AND FRIEND... I ACCEPT.

THEN LIKE HIM YOU SHALL BE BORN ***ANEW***--IN MY SERVICE, AS THE POWER COSMIC TRANSFORMS YOU! NOW AND FOREVERMORE SHALL YOU BE KNOWN AS--

--THE FIRELORD!

"GALACTUS KEPT HIS WORD, AND I LEARNED OF GABRIEL'S LIFE AS THE AIR-WALKER... AND OF HIS DEATH, AS WELL.

"THEREAFTER, GALACTUS SENT ME TO EARTH--WIPING THE WHEREABOUTS OF AIR-WALKER'S ROBOTIC REMAINS FROM MY MIND, THAT IT WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH MY MISSION.

"LATER, I REQUESTED MY OWN FREEDOM FROM SERVITUDE AND GALACTUS AGREED--SO LONG AS A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT WAS FOUND.

"THIS YOU DID IN MY BEHALF, THOR."

TAKE THIS ASGARDIAN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE ***DESTROYER***... A LIFELESS SHELL UNTIL ANIMATED BY YOUR AWESOME ENERGIES. WITH THIS BEING IN YOUR SERVICE, FIRELORD MAY BE FREED.

"AND I HAVE SINCE REMAINED ON EARTH, SENSING AN UNFULFILLED TASK THAT TIES ME TO THIS WORLD--YET NEVER FULLY COMPREHENDING WHAT OR WHY.

"NOW I KNOW WHAT THAT MISSION IS...TO RETURN GABRIEL TO THE PLACE THAT SPAWNED HIM.

HOURS AGO, I SAW YOU BATTLING AIR-WALKER ON TELEVISION, AND AT THAT INSTANT, MY STIFLED MEMORIES RETURNED FULLY. BUT BY THE TIME I HAD REACHED NEW YORK-- HE HAD BEEN DESTROYED AGAIN.

THOU HAS MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY OTHER WAY TO HALT HIM...

YOU NEED NOT APOLOGIZE, THOR. MY ATTACK ON YOU WAS UNPROVOKED. I SIMPLY FELT FRUSTRATION--THE NEED TO LASH OUT. CAN YOU FORGIVE ME?

LET US SPEAK NO MORE OF IT. INSTEAD, WE SHALL RETURN TO THE CITY AND THERE YOU MAY ATTEND TO YOUR LONG-DELAYED TASK.

YES I MUST!

ONE MYSTERY REMAINS... WHO WAS IT THAT DID RE-CONSTRUCT AND REVIVE THE AIR-WALKER, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?*

THAT, I FEAR, WE MAY NEVER KNOW, AND PER-HAPS IT IS ALL TO THE GOOD.

*UNKNOWN TO EITHER, GABRIEL'S SELF-REPAIR SYSTEM WAS UNWITTINGLY ACTIVATED BY THE VILLAINOUS **MACHINESMITH.** --JIM.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN AVOID MOVIN' THIS PILE'A JUNK WAITIN' FOR THOR TO COME BACK. TRAFFIC'S A MESS.

I AM BACK, OFFICERS, HERE TO RELIEVE THEE OF THE ROBOT AIR-WALKER.

FIRELORD WILL TAKE POSSESSION AT MY REQUEST.

BUT THIS GUY WAS TRYIN' TA FRY YER BUTT A LITTLE WHILE AGO! WHY SHOULD WE TRUST 'IM NOW?

'TWAS A MISUNDER-STANDING. 'PON MY WORD AS AN AVENGER, WHAT WE DO IS RIGHT.

YOU WILL BE OFF NOW, EH? AND WITH YOU GOES THE FRIENDSHIP AND REGARD OF THOR. IT IS NOT LIGHTLY GIVEN...

OR RECEIVED. WHEN I AM ALONE IN THE FAR REACHES, SUCH A GIFT WILL SUSTAIN ME WHATEVER THE HARD-SHIPS. MY THANKS.

WE'LL MEET AGAIN WHEN MY HEART KNOWS LESS SADNESS--LESS PAIN. FAREWELL, NORSEMAN...FAREWELL.

LOYALTY...HOW LIKE LOVE IN ITS POWER TO DRIVE BOTH MAN AND GOD. AT TIMES, E'EN LOGIC IS THE VICTIM. BUT 'TIS ALSO TRUE THAT THE HEART HAS REASONS THE MIND MAY NEVER KNOW.

AND BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN...LET IT ALWAYS BE SO.

EPILOGUE: THE WARM GLOW OF THE NEW SUN IRRADIATES THE SOOT-FILLED SKIES OF MANHATTAN, AS A WEARY THUNDER GOD MAKES HIS WAY TO HIS RENTED UPPER WESTSIDE HOTEL ADDRESS.

AND SO, AFTER UNTOLD MONTHS OF AIMLESS WANDERING, FIRE-LORD HAS DISCOVERED THE WAY HOME.

BUT, HERE ON MIDGARD, MY OWN MORTAL SELF HAS YET TO FIND A DWELLING PLACE HE MAY CALL HOME.

THERE IS TIME FOR THE BRIEFEST SLUMBER BEFORE ASSUMING MY DUTIES AT THE MEDICAL CLINIC.

HE ALIGHTS UPON THE SNOW-COVERED ROOFTOP AND PREPARES TO STRIKE SACRED MJOLNIR ONCE...

...BRINGING ABOUT THE MIRACULOUS TRANS-FORMATION FROM SCION OF ASGARD--

--TO THE LAME MORTAL, DOCTOR DON BLAKE.

THOR MAY HAVE SAVED THE DAY, BUT I'M NO CLOSER TO GETTING MY OWN PLACE THAN BEFORE.

SEVERAL HOURS LATER, AT THE **WEST-SIDE MEDICAL CLINIC**...

HEY, DOC, MAY I SEE YOU A MOMENT.

I KNOW YOU'RE STILL LOOKING FOR AN APARTMENT, AND I HAPPENED TO SEE THIS RENOVATED BUILDING AT WEST 88th STREET. LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE RENTING.

DR. HERNANDEZ, THANK YOU. IF I HAVE TO SPEND ANOTHER NIGHT IN A HOTEL, I'LL GO CRAZY.

YEAH, MY PLEASURE.

LATER THAT DAY, THE LAME PHYSICIAN IS GIVEN A GUIDED TOUR...

SUCH A PLACE I GOT FOR YOU... A PENTHOUSE WAITING TO BE BORN. SOME FOINITURE--YOU'RE IN BUSINESS. FOUR HUNDRED A MONTH--I'M IN BUSINESS.

SOUNDS REASONABLE. THIS MAY BE JUST WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.

MAYBE I MIGHT INTEREST YOU IN SOMETHING THE SAME A FEW FLOORS BELOW? THIS IS A WALK-UP... YOU GOT A CANE... WHO NEEDS COMPLAINTS?

NO PROBLEM. I LIKE A VIEW.

MR. GREEN-STEIN, I'LL TAKE IT.

EPILOGUE II: AN ASTEROID NEAR THE XANDARIAN SYSTEM...

THOUGH YOUR REMAINS WILL LIE HERE UNDISTURBED...

...YOUR SPIRIT WILL EVER WANDER THE VAST REACHES YOU LOVED SO WELL.

MY DESTINY AS THE FIRELORD IS NOW FULFILLED. YOUR FIRST OFFICER HAS BROUGHT YOU HOME GABRIEL.

I SALUTE YOU FOR THE FINAL TIME.

AND AS YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED... I HAVE LEFT MORE THAN A MERE HEADSTONE TO MARK YOUR GRAVE BE AT PEACE, MY CAPTAIN.

NEXT **WINGS IN THE NIGHT!**

RARELY HAVE THE DENIZENS OF THE DREADED **NORNHELM** KNOWN SUCH GLEE, AS THEY MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A WEDDING... A VERY SPECIAL WEDDING THAT WILL UNITE THEIR QUEEN, THE EVIL **KARNILLA**, WITH THE ASGARDIAN GOD OF LIGHT-- **BALDER THE BRAVE!**

"...TILL DEATH DO US PART!"

ALL PROCEEDS AS PLANNED, MY QUEEN. GNOME, TROLL AND DWARF EACH DO THEIR PART TO PLEASE THEE.

EXCELLENT, HAAG. IT HAS TAKEN ME LONG TO FORCE BALDER INTO WEDLOCK. TOO OFTEN HAS HE SPURNED MINE ADVANCES AND OFFERINGS OF LOVE. THUS I DID RESORT TO MEANS MOST DEVIOUS TO WIN HIM.

NOW HE WILL BE MINE AND WE SHALL CELEBRATE THE CONSUMMATION OF MY LABORS!

SPLENDID, MY BELOVED, ABSOLUTELY SPLENDID! I DID DESIGN THY WEDDING REGALIA FOR THIS OCCASION, AND THOU WEAR IT IN FINE FASHION. ART THOU NOT PLEASED WITH MY HANDIWORK, BALDER?

NAY KARNILLA. I BE NOT PLEASED... NOT AT ALL.

MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO — WRITERS
KEITH POLLARD & CHIC STONE — ARTISTS
MICHAEL HIGGINS — LETTERER
GEORGE ROUSSOS — COLORIST
JIM SALICRUP — EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER — EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I SEE. PERHAPS THOU ART WORRIED THAT THY FORMER LOVER--*NANA*--BE NOT SAFE IN ASGARD, EH?

WITH THE SIMPLEST OF SPELLS, LET ME BANISH SUCH FEARS BRAVE ONE.

POOF!

AHH, THERE SHE BE--NO DOUBT MOURNING THY LOSS TO ME. STILL, SHE BE UNHARMED... SAFE AS WHEN YOU DID FIRST MEET HER AND FALL IN LOVE, MERE WEEKS AGO, AT AN ASGARDIAN MARKETPLACE.

ART THOU SATISFIED?

YES.

AND IN THE ROOM OF THE WEEPING GIRL...

NAY...I'LL NOT SEE BALDER WEDDED TO THAT WITCH--*NEVER!*

WHEN WE WERE ABDUCTED BY THE NORN QUEEN, SHE DID THREATEN TO SLAY ME UNLESS BALDER ACCEPTED HER MARRIAGE PROPOSAL. WHEN HE DID, I WAS RETURNED TO ASGARD...*

...HERE TO REMAIN WHILE THEY BE WED-BUT I SWEAR IT SHALL NOT BE SO.'

*LAST ISSUE.--J.S.

HERMOD, THOU MUST HELP ME. WHICH OF THE HORSES IN THE ROYAL STABLE BE MOST FLEET OF FOOT?

WHY, LORD ODIN'S OWN MOUNT--EIGHT-HOOVED *SLEIPNIR*. WHY?

MY THANKS, HERMOD. NOW ASIDE--I BE OFF.

MILADY--DON'T! THAT IS ODIN'S *OWN*--PLEASE!

THOUGH I BE THE SWIFTEST OF ALL THE GODS, NOT E'EN *I* MAY O'ERTAKE SLEIPNIR.

THE MAGNIFICENT STEED SOON TAKES TO THE SKY, LEAVING BEHIND THE GLEAMING SPIRES OF THE CITY OF ASGARD--

--SOARING OVER LEGENDARY REALMS THAT HAVE FIRED THE IMAGINATIONS OF MEN... JOTHUNHEIM, RINGSJFORD AND UTGARD.

BUT THE HOODED RIDER SEEMS BLIND TO THE WONDERS THAT PASS BENEATH, SO INTENT IS SHE ON JOURNEY'S END.

AT LAST-- I COME IN SIGHT OF NORNHELM, DOMAIN OF THE ONE I MOST DESPISE.

NOW I MUST MAKE E'EN GREATER HASTE AND SEEK OUT KARNILLA'S CAVERN-CASTLE IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE NORN KINGDOM.

SUCH AN AWESOME EDIFICE SHOULD BE EASY TO DISCERN AMIDST THIS BLEAK TERRAIN. I ONLY PRAY I AM IN *TIME* TO SET THINGS A'RIGHT.

PERHAPS THE ANXIOUS NANNA WOULD PRESS HER STEED EVEN MORE FORCIBLY IF SHE COULD SEE THE STRANGE CEREMONY UNDERWAY AT THIS MOMENT, LESS THAN A MILE DISTANT...

PREPARE YE NOW TO BE JOINED AS ONE IN THE SIGHT OF ASSEMBLED NORNHELM.

WHY SO SILENT, MY BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL BRIDEGROOM? CAN IT BE THOU ART CONSIDERING NOT COMPLETING THE NUPTIALS--AND AFTER THY PLEDGE TO ME?

I AM AWARE OF MY PLEDGE, MILADY. AND I SHALL HONOR IT THOUGH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING CRIES OUT--

STOP! STOP THE CEREMONY! I HAVE COME TO PUT AN END TO THIS MADNESS.

NANNA?!

STAY BACK, LET THE FOOLISH ONE THROUGH. PERHAPS SHE HAS FORGOTTEN THAT BY OATH, BALDER IS BOUND TO ME UNLESS IN SOME MANNER I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR HER DEATH...

AT THAT TIME-- AND ONLY AT THAT TIME -- WILL BALDER BE RELEASED FROM HIS MARRIAGE VOW.

WELL DO I KNOW HOW THOU DID THREATEN MY LIFE TO EXTRACT SUCH A PROMISE FROM BALDER--EVIL ONE!

BUT ONE THING THOU FAIL TO SPECIFY IN THY HIDEOUS TERMS... WHETHER OR NOT THOU MUST BE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MY DEATH.

GO ON, CHILD, THIS MAY PROVE AMUSING.

THOU SAID BALDER IS FREE IF THROUGH ANY MEANS THOU BRING ABOUT MY DEMISE. AND SO YOU SHALL...

...E'EN IF I MUST SLAY MYSELF.

NO-- YOU FOOL! YOU STUPID FOOL... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

UHHH...

DONE... I HAVE PREVENTED A MONSTROUS INJUSTICE--A BLASPHEMY FROM COMING TO PASS.

NANNA-- NANNA... NO!!

YOU MUST NOT DIE-- I LOVE THEE!

LET ME HOLD THEE, MILADY... DRAW STRENGTH FROM ME.

NAY, BALDER. THE DAGGER HATH PIERCED MY HEART. 'TIS TOO LATE

NANNA... GLADLY WOULD I HAVE REMAINED WED TO KARNILLA FOR ALL ETERNITY IF NEED BE ...IF THAT WOULD HAVE KEPT YOU SAFE, BELOVED.

I KNOW, MY LOVE... I KNOW. AND FOR THAT REASON DID I SACRIFICE MYSELF.

MOURN NOT FOR ME... I AM AT PEACE. AND REMEMBER ALWAYS... I LOVE THEE BALDER... I LOVE THEE...

SHE BE DEAD! *DEAD!*

AND THOUGH THOU DID NOT LIFT THY HAND TO SLAY HER--STILL 'TIS THY DOING!

AND SO I BE *FREE* OF THEE AND THY CURSED OATH! NE'ER AGAIN DO I WISH TO GAZE 'PON THY HATED VISAGE!

I'LL NOT SET THEE LOOSE THAT EASILY, MY BRAVE ONE. I'LL...

...I SHALL BE IN MY CHAMBERS IF THOU SHOULD CHANGE THY MIND ABOUT REMAINING.

IF NOT, I EXPECT THEE AND THE WENCH TO BE GONE WHEN I RETURN LATER.

THE ASSEMBLAGE DISPERSES, LEAVING THE TWO LOVERS ALONE... ONE IN GRIEF... THE OTHER IN DEATH.

FOR HOURS THE SOUNDS OF SOBBING ECHO IN THE RECESSES OF THE GREAT CAVERN. AND THEN, WITH THE COMING OF DAWN, ALL IS SILENT AND STILL.

The End.

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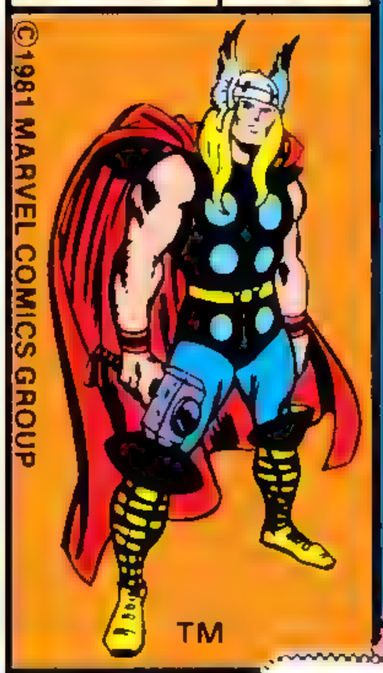

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THE MIGHTY

THOR™

A. KUPPERBERG + F. GIACOIA

CAN THOR'S ALTER EGO--
DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE SURVIVE

THE DREAM DEMON?!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

WINGS IN THE NIGHT!

'TWOULD SEEM THE CITY IS SLUMBERING WELL THIS NIGHT... NOTHING HAVE I SEEN TO CLAIM THE ATTENTION OF THE GOD OF THUNDER.

NOW, TIS TIME FOR THOR HIMSELF TO SEEK THE BALM OF SLEEP, CONTENT THAT MY PRESENCE IS NOT NEEDED THIS EVE.

GRUENWALD & MACCHIO WRITERS	ALAN KUPPERBERG LAYOUTS	CHIC STONE FINISHED ART	JOE ROSEN LETTERING	GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORING	JIM SALICRUP EDITOR	JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GRACEFULLY, HE ALIGHTS UPON THE SNOW-CRESTED ROOFTOP OF HIS UPPER WESTSIDE BROWNSTONE.

AT LAST MY MORTAL HALF... THE LAME PHYSICIAN *DONALD BLAKE* HAS SET UP PERMANENT RESIDENCE HERE. 'TIS GOOD TO HAVE A HOME AT--

--EH? THE TELEPHONE RINGING. THERE BE NO TIME TO ALTER IDENTITIES, THOR SHALL ANSWER.

brrrrnng

YES...THIS IS DONALD BLAKE.

DON, I MUST HAVE GOTTEN YOU UP, YOUR VOICE SOUNDS A BIT HUSKY. SORRY.

LISTEN, I KNOW YOUR NIGHT SHIFT ISN'T UNTIL TUESDAY BUT WE'RE A BIT UNDERSTAFFED AND A WEIRD PROBLEM HAS COME UP.

I WILL BE THERE SHORTLY, RAMON.

THANKS, AMIGO.

THOUGH I CRAVE REST AND NOURISHMENT, THIS "WEIRD PROBLEM" IS INTRIGUING.

STILL, IT MAY BE BEST TO SEEK SUSTENANCE BEFORE LEAVING.

NAY, THERE BE LITTLE HERE TO SATISFY THE HUNGER OF A GOD.

THEN I MUST HIE DIRECTLY TO THE MEDICAL CLINIC WHICH EMPLOYS DR. BLAKE AND THE MYSTERY THAT AWAITS THEREIN.

WITH A WHIRL OF HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER **MJOLNIR**, THE MIGHTY THOR LAUNCHES HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN OVER THE FAMOUS SKYLINE OF MANHATTAN.

MY APARTMENT IS BUT TEN BLOCKS FROM THE MEDICAL CLINIC.

BY THE MIGHT OF MY MALLET, I SHALL REACH--EH? WHAT WAS THAT? MINE EYE DID CATCH SIGHT OF SOMETHING.... A FLEETING BLUR OF SOME SORT...

...OR SO IT DID SEEM. NOW I DETECT NOTHING.

EVEN AS THE STORM GOD LOOPS BACK UPON HIS PATH, A SPECTRAL COUNTENANCE THRUSTS ITSELF FROM ITS PLACE OF REFUGE, WATCHING THE RETREATING AVENGER WITH A MALEVOLENT GLARE...

PERHAPS 'TWAS BUT A WISP OF SMOKE OR SOME REFUSE FLOATING IN THE WIND.

THE CLINIC BE BELOW. WHAT PROBLEM I WONDER COULD HAVE ARISEN TO REQUIRE AID? WE ARE NOT AN EMERGENCY ROOM, MERELY AN ALL-NIGHT NEIGHBORHOOD MEDICAL FACILITY.

LANDING IN THE ALLEY BEHIND THE CLINIC, THOR KNEELS...

...AND STRIKES HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER ON THE GROUND, WITH A MIGHTY THUNDERCLAP.

WHEN THE BLINDING BRILLIANCE FADES, THOR HAS BEEN BODILY TRANSFORMED INTO THE LAME DR. DONALD BLAKE...

QUICKLY, BLAKE LIMPS TO THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING, AND ENTERS BY THE MAIN DOOR...

HEY, AMIGO, THAT WAS FAST.

FOR A GUY WITH A BUM LEG, YOU SURE GET AROUND.

SO WHY'S BUSINESS SO GOOD TONIGHT?

SEE FOR YOURSELF. THE EXAM ROOM'S OVERFLOWING WITH 'EM.

INCREDIBLE! IT APPEARS THEY'RE ALL SUFFERING FROM SHOCK, BUT WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE CAUSED THIS TO HAPPEN TO SO MANY PEOPLE AT ONCE!

THAT'S JUST IT. I HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA. NONE OF THESE FOLK EVEN KNOW EACH OTHER.

HEY, MR. BANKS, COME HERE AND TELL MY ASSOCIATE WHAT YOU TOLD ME.

WELL, MY BOY WILLIE HERE WENT TA BED TONIGHT, SAME AS USUAL. SUDDENLY I HEAR HIM SCREAM AN' RUN IN HIS ROOM TO FIND HIM SITTIN' IN BED LIKE A ZOMBIE.

I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO SNAP 'IM OUTTA THE TRANCE HE'S IN.

TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE WAS YOUR SON TAKING ANY KIND OF DRUG?

NOSSIR. MY BOY DON'T TOUCH THAT JUNK.

SO WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, DON? SEVEN OF 'EM -- ALL WITH THE SAME SYMPTOM... AND ALL HERE.

I'M NOT SURE. LET'S DO A THOROUGH EXAMINATION ON THEM ALL AND SEE IF THERE'S SOME COMMON ELEMENT WE CAN GET A HANDLE ON.

AND AS BLAKE AND HERNANDEZ BEGIN THEIR ANALYSIS, A SCANT THIRTEEN BLOCKS AWAY, A WINGED APPARITION ENGAGES IN SEEMINGLY RANDOM ACTS OF MAYHEM AND DESTRUCTION...

HOLEE SHEESH! THAT FALLING CONCRETE ALMOST ACED ME!

THE CREATURE TAKES FLIGHT, FLITTING FROM ROOFTOP TO STREET TO BUILDING LIKE SOME MONSTROUS MOTH...

ITS PATH IS SEEMINGLY ERRATIC, ITS PURPOSE...THE PROPAGATION OF TERROR.

SEEKING OUT THE NIGHT'S SOLITARY DENIZENS, THE CREATURE POUNCES, PREYING UPON THEIR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL WEAKNESSES.

SCREECH!

AAAAAH!

BUT AFTER A FLURRY OF VIOLENCE, IT FINDS ITSELF IN NEED OF SUSTENANCE...

...THE SUSTENANCE THAT ONLY THE ENERGY OF HUMAN NIGHTMARES CAN PROVIDE.

A WOMAN SLEEPS FITFULLY, BUFFETED BY DREAMS OF DESPAIR AND PAIN. THE DEMON REACHES OUT TO HER...

ITS TOUCH IS COLD AND CLAMMY--LIKE THE HAND OF DEATH.

WITH A START, SHE AWAKENS TO FIND THE LEERING CREATURE LOOMING OVER HER.

AAAAAAH!

THE WOMAN'S SHRIEK OF HORROR INUNDATES THE RAPACIOUS PHANTASM. IT PIVOTS, SEEKING ASYLUM IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT.

SHE COLLAPSES, HER MIND TRAPPED SOMEWHERE BETWEEN WAKEFULNESS AND SLEEP. HER NIGHTMARES HAVE VANISHED... SUCKED FROM HER AS A VAMPIRE WOULD TAKE BLOOD--BRUTALLY, WITH NO REGARD FOR THE VICTIM.

THE DREAM DEMON GLIDES AWAY, SAVORING THE FLAVOR OF THE WOMAN'S NIGHTMARES, DRAWING NEW STRENGTH FROM THEIR INTENSITY...

MEANWHILE, AT THE WESTSIDE CLINIC...

I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, RAMON. WE'VE RUN INTO A BLANK WALL. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO CHEMICAL EVIDENCE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE STUPOR THE SEVEN OF THEM ARE IN.

IT'S NOT A NARCOTIC, IT'S NOT A VIRUS...I DON'T THINK THE PROBLEM IS ORGANIC AT ALL.

AND THE PATIENTS SHOW NO SIGN OF IMPROVEMENT, EITHER.

Y'KNOW, DON, I WAS THINKING OF WHAT THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT THEM IN SAID. MOST OF 'EM REPORTED HEARING THE PATIENT *SCREAM.*

BESIDES PAIN, THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES YOU SCREAM IS FEAR.

IS IT POSSIBLE THEY COULD HAVE ALL BEEN FRIGHTENED BY SOMETHING?

WELL, LOOK. IT'S 4 A.M. AND YOU HAVE TO BE IN TOMORROW AT 10. WHY DON'T YOU CALL IT A NIGHT?

I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL IF ANYTHING BREAKS.

RIGHT. G'NIGHT, RAMON.

OUTSIDE...

THIS IS UNBELIEVABLY BIZARRE! I'VE NEVER COME ACROSS ANYTHING LIKE IT IN ALL MY CAREER. I'M CONVINCED THOSE POOR PEOPLE ARE SOMEHOW BEYOND THE REACH OF MEDICINE.

TAKI 183

WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO BE MUCH USE TO ANYONE UNLESS I GET SOME SLEEP. NOW TO HUNT UP A CAB...

WHAT? FLYING OVER THOSE BUILDINGS-- I THINK THAT'S WHAT I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF EARLIER!

LOOKS LIKE DON BLAKE'S BEAUTY SLEEP IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE UNAVOIDABLY DELAYED.

WHATEVER THAT THING IS, IT'S PIQUED THE CURIOSITY OF--

--THOR!

THIS TIME I SHALL PERSIST IN MY PURSUIT UNTIL I ENCOUNTER THE CREATURE.

CRISSCROSSING THE CITY STREETS, THE THUNDER GOD EVENTUALLY SPOTS HIS QUARRY...

'TIS A WINGED *DEMON*-- LIKE SOMETHING GLIMPSED IN THE SHADOWY PITS OF NIFFLEHEIM. 'TWOULD APPEAR MY SUSPICIONS WERE JUSTIFIED.

BUT WHAT MANNER OF BEING IS IT TO SO ENGAGE IN RAMPANT DESTRUCTION?

MAKING NOT THE SLIGHTEST SOUND, THE MINDLESS DEVOURER OF NIGHTMARES ACKNOWLEDGES THE ASGARDIAN AVENGER'S PRESENCE WITH AN ATTACK...

FIEND! NONE MAY ASSAULT THE SON OF ALMIGHTY ODIN WITH IMPUNITY.

--YOUR MAKE-SHIFT PROJECTILE IS USELESS AGAINST ONE WHO POSSESSES MAGNIFICENT MJOLNIR--

--THE WEAPON SUPREME!

EH? IT PASSES THROUGH THE CREATURE AS IF THE BEAST WERE BUT AN APPARITION.

BUT HOW CAN IT GRASP MATERIAL THINGS IF ITS OWN SUBSTANCE IS IMMATERIAL?

I SHALL DETERMINE THE DEMON'S SURFACE PROPERTIES BETTER AT CLOSER QUARTERS!

MAYHAP MUSCLE MAY SUCCEED WHERE URU METAL HAS FAILED!

UNNNHH. I AM TRAPPED IN A GRIP OF IRON -- YET MY ENCHANTED MALLET CANNOT STRIKE IN MY STEAD! WHAT INFERNAL WIZARDRY IS THIS?

BUT...

UNNNFF!

MADDENING! THE DEMON SWATS ME LIKE SOME LOWLY *INSECT*--

--WHILE I AM UNABLE TO TOUCH IT, HOW DOES ONE FIGHT A PHANTOM?

AND NOW IT TAKES FLIGHT...!

POLICE

HEY, YOU--WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

BY ODIN'S SACRED SPEAR--IT SHALL NOT ELUDE ME, NO MATTER HOW FAST AND FURIOUS IT FLIES.

FOR OVER A HALF HOUR, THOR GIVES CHASE TO THE WHITE PHANTASM IN AND AROUND THE CONCRETE CANYONS OF THE CITY. AND THEN...

DO MINE EYES DECEIVE ME? THE DEMON SEEMS TO BE SHIMMERING, VANISHING INTO THIN AIR!

'TIS AS IF IT NE'ER EXISTED.

DAWN BREAKS... AND I HAVE YET TO SLEEP THIS NIGHT.

E'EN IMMORTALS NEED THE SWEET BLISS OF SLUMBER, THOUGH 'TIS MY HUMAN SELF WHOSE ENDURANCE WILL BE TAXED IN THE DAY AHEAD.

AND, AFTER AN ALL-TOO-BRIEF NAP, THOR'S MORTAL SELF TRUDGES THROUGH THE FEBRUARY FROST ON HIS WAY BACK TO WORK...

THANK HEAVEN FOR A STIFF MUG OF COFFEE TO GET THE JUICES FLOWING.

HMMM, IT SEEMS THAT DEMON THOR RAN INTO LAST NIGHT WAS MORE ACTIVE THAN I THOUGHT. IT LEFT A WAKE OF DESTRUCTION FROM 72ND STREET ALL THE WAY UP TO 150TH.

ODD... IT SEEMS TO BE CONFINED TO THE WEST SIDE.

SPORTS TONIGHT IN THE DAILY BUGLE

DAILY BUGLE

SPORTS

KAYO IN 10TH

VANDAL SPREE STUMPS POLICE

SOON, AT THE CLINIC...

GOOD MORNING, DR. BLAKE.

THE SHOCK VICTIMS WE GOT IN LAST NIGHT-- HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE?

NO, BUT TWO *MORE* OF THEM HAVE BEEN ADMITTED THIS MORNING, SAME SYMPTOMS AS THE REST. DR. JEFFRIES IS BRINGING IN A SPECIALIST TO LOOK AT THEM.

PATIENT RE

I SEE.

MINUTES LATER, BLAKE'S SUPERIOR, DR. JEFFRIES, ARRIVES...

AH, BLAKE, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MILTON MEILICKI, A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST FROM BELLEVUE.

MEILICKI IS GOING TO TRY HYPNOTHERAPY ON OUR MYSTERY PATIENTS.

WELL, WE'VE EXHAUSTED THE POSSIBILITIES OF ORGANIC DISORDERS, SO THE PROBLEM MUST BE PSYCHOSOMATIC.

IT IS UFFEN DIFFICULT TO KNOW VHERE ZE MIND ENDS AND THE BODY BEGINS.

GAZE AT MY VATCH, YOUNG VOMAN. OBSERVE AS IT SVINGS BACK AND FORTH...

SOME TIME LATER...

I AM SORRY, GENTLEMEN. IT DOES NOT VORK. ZE PATIENTS RESIST MY EVERY ATTEMPT.

IT IS AS THOUGH ZEY ARE ALREADY IN A HYPNOTIC TRANCE. I AM UNABLE TO BRING ZEM OUT BY CONVENTIONAL HYPNOSIS.

DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THEIR CONDITION TO BE THE RESULT OF SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA?

MY INTERVIEWS WITH THE PATIENTS' FAMILIES BRINGS UP BUT VUN CONNECTION -- ZEY ALL COMPLAINED OF *BAD DREAMS*. I KNOW OF A PSYCHIATRIST AT THE UNIFERSITY WHO IS QVITE AN AUTHORITY ON DREAMS. I SUGGEST YOU CONTACT HIM.

THANKS FOR COMING, MILTON.

LATER THAT DAY, BLAKE HAS SECURED HIS SUPERIOR'S PERMISSION TO TAKE LEAVE OF HIS MEDICAL CHORES IN ORDER TO FOLLOW UP THEIR ONLY LEAD...

INSTITUTE FOR ONEIROLOGICAL RESEARCH

"INSTITUTE FOR ONEIROLOGICAL RESEARCH"... FASCINATING, A WHOLE FACILITY DEVOTED TO STUDY DREAMS.

I'M *EUGENE BEAUMONT*, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE. IF IT'S BAD DREAMS YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT, DR. BLAKE, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.

I'M TOLD YOU TAKE QUITE A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO PSYCHOTHERAPY HERE, DR. BEAUMONT.

MY WORK IN TREATING MENTAL DISORDERS HAS BEEN QUITE CONTROVERSIAL. I'VE BEEN DUBBED THE "NIGHTMARE EXORCIST" BY SOME OF MY LESS-THAN-CHARITABLE COLLEAGUES.

COME, LET ME SHOW YOU MY FACILITIES.

THIS CONTRAPTION HERE IS THE KEY TO MY TREATMENT. IT IS A COMPUTER TERMINAL THAT MONITORS AND RECORDS THE BRAIN ACTIVITY OF THE SLEEPING MIND.

THROUGH BIOFEEDBACK, IT ENABLES THE SLEEPER TO DRIVE OUT THE GUILT, FEARS AND FRUSTRATIONS THAT TORMENT HIM.

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS HAVE YOU BEEN GETTING?

SO FAR VERY ENCOURAGING. HOWEVER, IT HAS BEEN JUST THIS WEEK THAT THE MACHINE YOU SEE HERE HAS BEEN IN OPERATION. UP UNTIL NOW, I'VE ONLY HAD SMALL PROTOTYPE "DREAM MACHINES," AS THEY'VE BEEN NICKNAMED.

I HAVE A GROUP OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED PATIENTS BROUGHT IN HERE EVERY NIGHT FOR DREAM THERAPY. THE RESULTS SO FAR HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLE. MY MACHINE HAS INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL FOR BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION.

IT MUST HAVE TAKEN YEARS OF RESEARCH TO DEVELOP ALL THIS, DR. BEAUMONT --

--SO I WOULD ASSUME THAT YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF DREAM PHENOMENA IS VAST. TELL ME, CAN BAD DREAMS CAUSE SUCH EMOTIONAL TRAUMA AS TO INDUCE A CATATONIC STATE OF WITHDRAWAL?

IT IS WELL WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY, DR. BLAKE.

THE HUMAN MIND HAS VAST, UNTAPPED POTENTIAL.

I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU ABOUT SOME PATIENTS OF MINE, DR. BEAUMONT...

DESCRIBING HIS PATIENTS' PLIGHT TO THE DREAM RESEARCHER, BLAKE ARRANGES TO BRING THEM TO THE INSTITUTE THE NEXT DAY.

AND AT LAST, HE RETURNS TO HIS APARTMENT...

WITH ANY LUCK, DR. BEAUMONT'S DREAM THERAPY WILL SUCCEED WHERE MEDICINE HAS FAILED.

AND IF I DON'T GET A LITTLE SLEEP INTO MY SYSTEM, I'LL BE READY TO GO CATATONIC MYSELF.

I KNOW THAT THING'S GOING TO STRIKE AGAIN, BUT I HAVE TO GET SOME REST FIRST. I HAVE TO...

WITH A DEEP SIGH, THE FRAIL PHYSICIAN TRIES TO BANISH THE DAY'S TENSIONS FROM HIS THOUGHTS...

...AND BEFORE LONG HE SLIPS INTO THE DEPTHS OF A MUCH NEEDED SLEEP.

BUT THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF WAKEFULNESS DO NOT CEASE...

INSTEAD, THEY JOIN THE JUMBLE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND BLAKE SHARES WITH HIS ASGARDIAN ALTER EGO. THERE, THE FEARS AND FANTASIES OF TWO LIVES INTERMINGLE IN NIGHTMARE...

THOU HAST FORSAKEN ASGARD FOR THE MUDBALL EARTH, OFFSPRING... TURNING THY BACK ON THY FATHER.

ODIN!

LOKI!

SIF!

AYE, ODIN! NOW THOU SEE 'TIS LOKI WHO BE MOST LOYAL OF THY SONS--LOKI WHO SHOULD BE HEIR TO THY THRONE!

I BEG OF YOU, THOR--DON'T MAKE ME LIVE ON EARTH! I DETEST IT THERE!

NO ONE LIKES YOU AT THE CLINIC, BLAKE. GET LOST!

I'M JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO FOUL UP, BLAKE, SO I CAN HAVE THE PLEASURE OF FIRING YOU!

AND AS DON BLAKE WRESTLES WITH THE DEMONS OF HIS PSYCHE, HIS SUBCONSCIOUS TURMOIL EMANATES THROUGH THE NIGHT LIKE A CURRENT THROUGH THE ETHER...

...ATTRACTING A DEMON OF ANOTHER STRIPE...

HOLD, MONSTER! THOU MUST NOT DESTROY THOSE I LOVE!

THOU MUST NOT-- NOT--

A-A DREAM--?

MMMMPH!

THE CREATURE! IT-IT'S HERE! IT'S NOT A DREAM!

I CAN'T BREATHE--IT'S SMOTHERING ME!

THE DEMON TREMBLES, AS A RUSH OF EMOTIONAL ENERGY FLOWS FROM HIS VICTIM'S SUBCONSCIOUS INTO ITS BODY. THE FEEDBACK IS OVERWHELMING, UNLIKE ANY IT HAS EVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE--FOR IT IS THE DREAMS OF A GOD UPON WHICH IT FEEDS!

MY *CANE*--IT'S AT MY BEDSIDE. IF I CAN ONLY--REACH IT--!

I'VE...GOT... IT!

thump

ENOW, DEMON! 'TIS A GOD THOU MUST NOW CONTEND WITH -- NOT SOME MERE MORTAL!

THE DEMON'S HAND -- TANGIBLE WHERE IT CLUTCHED MY FACE! AT LAST I CAN BRING MY OWN MIGHT TO BEAR 'GAINST IT!

IT SLIPS THROUGH MY FINGERS -- INTANGIBLE ONCE MORE! NO MATTER, THE CREATURE STAGGERS BACK!

THOU HAST SAVED ME THE TROUBLE OF HUNTING FOR THEE, NIGHTSPAWN!

ARE MINE EYES DECEIVED? THE MONSTER SEEMS TO BE GROWING E'EN AS IT FLEES!

'TIS TRUE. IT HATH GROWN TO TWICE ITS FORMER STATURE!

BUT WHY? ITS SIZE REMAINED CONSTANT THROUGHOUT LAST NIGHT'S BATTLE! UNLESS... IT HATH DRAWN POWER FROM ME IN SOME DARK MANNER!

BUT POWER OF WHAT NATURE? IT HAS SAPPED NONE OF MY GODLY STRENGTH! WHAT THEN COULD IT HAVE BEEN FEEDING 'PON?

IT ATTACKED ME WHILST I SLEPT. HAD I NOT BECOME THOR, WHAT FATE WOULD HAVE BEFALLEN ME? BY ODIN'S OUTCAST EYE, THIS MUST HAVE BEEN THE CREATURE THAT ATTACKED DR. BLAKE'S PATIENTS!

I DREAMED OF THE CREATURE JUST BEFORE IT SO COWARDLY STRUCK. COULD THERE BE A CONNECTION?

'TWOULD SEEM THE DEMON FEEDS 'PON DREAMS LIKE A LEECH, LEAVING ONLY THE DRIED HUSKS OF ITS VICTIMS.

BUT WHAT COULD HAVE SPAWNED SUCH A MONSTER? SORCERY-- OR SCIENCE?

THE DREAM RESEARCHER I MET TODAY MIGHT KNOW THE ANSWER. OR PERHAPS-- *BE* THE ANSWER.

WITHIN MOMENTS, UPTOWN...

THE DEMON PURSUES ME MADLY AS IF I POSED A THREAT TO ITS VERY EXISTENCE.

NO TIME TO WASTE. I CAN MAKE REPARATIONS LATER.

KRUNZ

WHAT IN THE--? WH-WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I AM THOR, GOD OF THUNDER. I MUST ASK YOU TO SHUT DOWN THY MACHINERY. LIFE ITSELF IS IN JEOPARDY BECAUSE OF IT.

YOU MUST BE CRAZY! I CANNOT INTERFERE WITH MY PATIENTS' THERAPY. THEIR MENTAL HEALTH IS AT STAKE. WHY WOULD--?

JUST THEN...

HOLY--! WHAT IS IT?

DOCTOR--IN SOME ARCANE MANNER, YOUR MACHINE HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A MONSTER!

THOU MUST DEACTIVATE THY MACHINE -- *NOW!*

A-ALL RIGHT! I'LL DO AS YOU SAY.

KLIK

THERE! I SHUT DOWN THE MAIN POWER!

KLIK

KLIK

KLIK

'TWOULD SEEM TO NO AVAIL! THE DEMON STILL STANDS!

AM I WRONG ABOUT THE CREATURE'S ORIGIN-- OR--?

KTANG

NAY! 'TIS NO MAN-MADE DEVICE THAT EMPOWERS THE DEMON-- 'TIS THE *DREAMERS.*

WITH THE RESOUNDING PEAL OF MY HAMMER, I HAVE AWAKENED THY SLEEPING PATIENTS. BEHOLD--THE DEMON REELS AS THEY CEASE TO DREAM!

MY STRATAGEM WORKED! THE DEMON DISSIPATES INTO NOTHINGNESS!

WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND HERE? WHAT WAS THAT THING?

A NIGHT-MARE COME TO LIFE.

IN SOME UNKNOWABLE MANNER, AS YOUR MACHINE RID YOUR PATIENTS OF THEIR DARK VISIONS, THE EXPELLED ENERGIES FUSED INTO A MALICIOUS ENTITY.

DRAWN TO OTHER TROUBLED SLEEPERS IN THE VICINITY, THE DEMON FED 'PON THEIR TORMENT, GROWING EVER STRONGER--

--AND THEN ACTED 'PON THE DESTRUC-TIVE IMPULSES THAT EXIST IN ALL MEN'S SUB-CONSCIOUS.

I HAD NO IDEA MY MACHINE COULD--!

VERILY, DOCTOR, THOU ART BLAMELESS OF WRONGDOING.

THOU SOUGHT ONLY TO HELP THY FELLOW MAN BY EASING HIS MENTAL SUFFER-ING.

BUT OFTIMES THE CURE BE MORE DEADLY THAN THE DIS-EASE. PERHAPS MAN MUST LEARN TO LIVE WITH HIS NIGHT-MARES, NOT CAST THEM OUT...

THE NEXT DAY, AT THE WESTSIDE CLINIC...

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS, DON--

--BUT LAST NIGHT AROUND TEN O'CLOCK ALL NINE OF OUR MYSTERY PATIENTS SIMULTANEOUSLY CAME OUT OF THEIR TRANCES!

NOT ONLY THAT-- NONE OF 'EM REMEMBERS A THING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM! HOW ARE WE GOING TO EXPLAIN THAT TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH?

BEATS ME.

THE END

THE CHAINS THAT BIND!

THOUGH IT IS OFTEN SPOKEN OTHERWISE, ALL IS **NOT** BLISS AMONG THE GODS. WITNESS: THE FARAWAY REALM OF **ASGARD**, WHERE EVIL **LOKI**, HALF-BROTHER TO **THOR**, ENGAGES IN A SCENE OF EXPLOSIVE DISCORD...

MARK GRUENWALD AND RALPH MACCHIO
WRITERS
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ENOUGH, SIGYN! ENOUGH! IS E'EN THE LUXURY OF CHOOSING MINE OWN RAIMENT NOW DENIED ME?! AM I TO BE CLOTHED AND CODDLED LIKE SOME HELPLESS INFANT?!

I-I HAVE IT HERE, MILORD. 'TWAS THE NEXT ARTICLE I WOULD HAVE OFFERED.

AHH... AT LAST LOKI DOTH WEAR THAT WHICH PLEASES HIM... REGALIA BEFITTING--

--THE *GOD OF MISCHIEF.*

BUT, MY HUSBAND... THE CHOICE OF THY HEADDRESS IS--

MINE, WOMAN! MINE AND MINE ALONE! NOW FETCH THEE MY HORNED HELMET THAT WE MAY HAVE AN END TO THIS IDIOCY. AT ONCE!

SPANNGG

WOMAN, THOU DOST SORELY TRY MY PATIENCE. I BE SICK OF THY INCESSANT, INFERNAL CONCERN FOR MY WELL-BEING.

CAN THOU NOT LEAVE ME ALONE... FOR E'EN AN *INSTANT?*

I WOULD DO WHATE'ER WOULD PLEASE THEE, LOKI, BUT WHAT YOU ASK IS MOST DIFFICULT-- CONSIDERING WE BE CHAINED AS ONE.

THEN WE SHALL BE CHAINED NO LONGER! LORD ODIN DID CREATE THIS UNNATURAL ATTACHMENT AS PENALTY FOR MY CONSPIRACY 'GAINST THE REALM ETERNAL...*

...AND ODIN MAY END IT. AND BY ALL THE DREAD DEMONS I CALL BRETHREN-- END IT HE MUST-- *NOW!*

*THOR #275. -- J.S.

BUT THE ALL-FATHER HAS DECREED THY SENTENCE-LENGTH ALREADY... AND 'TIS EXPECTED OF SIGYN THAT SHE WATCH O'ER THEE 'TIL IT BE DONE. THAT IS A WIFE'S DUTY.

A WIFE'S DUTY, INDEED.

I DO WONDER IF THY CONCERN WOULD BE SO GREAT IF THOU WERE AWARE OF THE MANY BAWDY EPISODES I DID PARTAKE IN, WHEN THOU WERE ABSENT FROM ASGARD FOR MANY MONTHS ON A MISSION FOR ODIN.

THE STUNNING *ENCHANTRESS* AND RAVEN-HAIRED *KARNILLA*--BOTH DID OFFER ME THEIR AFFECTIONS. AND I DID ACCEPT WITH THE PRACTICED EASE OF ONE ACCUSTOMED TO FEMININE ATTENTIONS.

S-SPARE ME THY TALES OF INFIDELITY, MY HUSBAND. DOUBTLESS THEY ARE BUT FABRICATIONS SPOKE ONLY TO HURT ME. WHY--I MAY ONLY GUESS.

SEE IT AS THOU WILL, SIGYN.

BUT KNOW THEE THIS...NO LONGER WILL I BE BOUND TO THEE IN THIS MANNER.

NOW WE BE OFF TO THE PALACE ROYAL WHERE I MAY CONFRONT ODIN AND DEMAND THE REMOVAL OF THESE CHAINS THAT HAVE CAUSED ME SO MUCH AGONY. COME...AND NOT A WORD 'PON THE WAY.

AND, AT THE PALACE IMPERIAL...

A BIT HIGHER, KNAVE, THOU HAST MISSED A SPOT.

'TIS NOT MY DESIRE TO SUPERVISE THY ARMOR-POLISHING, BUT I'LL NOT HAVE MY LIEGE LOOKING LESS THAN HIS BEST AT THE PROCESSION-VIEWING ON THE MORROW.

A THOUSAND PARDONS, MY QUEEN. BUT I DESIRE AUDIENCE WITH ALL-MIGHTY ODIN...

...AND WAS JUST REFUSED ENTRY TO THE ROYAL THRONEROOM BY HIS GUARDS.

MY HUSBAND WISHES NOT TO BE DISTURBED.

PLEASE, MILADY. IT BE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

VERY WELL.

HEH! THEN BEING GOD OF THE TRACKLESS SEAS IS NOT THE SOLITARY HARDSHIP I DID THINK, EH, *AEGIR?*

AYE, ODIN. I COULD REGALE THEE FOR AN AGE WITH TALES OF THE OCEAN-NYMPHS AND THE COMPANIONSHIP--AMONG OTHER THINGS--THEY HAVE BROUGHT ME IN THE WINE-DARK DEPTHS. 'TIS A GOOD LIFE, MINE OLD FRIEND.

MY LORD.

I WOULD HAVE A WORD WITH THEE.

NOT NOW, FRIGGA. CANST THOU NOT SEE I AM IN THE MIDST OF MERRIMENT?

IT CONCERNS LOKI. HE WISHES TO SEE THEE AT ONCE.

HE DOES?

AT ONCE?

SIRE, FORGIVE THIS UNSEEMLY INTRUSION. BUT I COULD WAIT NO LONGER.

LOKI, PLEASE!

YOUR SON, ODIN?

ALAS, YES.

THOU HAST NOT BEEN GIVEN LEAVE TO ENTER THE ROYAL CHAMBER, LOKI.

ART THOU NOT SATISFIED WITH THE PUNISHMENT ALREADY THINE?

THOU DOST INCUR MY WRATH AT A MOST TERRIBLE PRICE!

NAY, SIRE-- DON'T!

"WITH THE MEREST THOUGHT, I COULD HAVE THEE TIED TO A BLAZING SPIT TO ROAST FOR ETERNITY IN THE DEATH-GODDESS' DOMAIN OF *NIFFLEHEIM*...

"...OR CHAIN THEE TO A METEOR HURTLING THROUGH BLACKEST SPACE, THERE TO FREEZE, BECOMING AS ROCK THYSELF.

"MAYHAP IF *AEGIR* WOULD PERMIT, I COULD OFFER THEE BOUND, AS SLOWLY CONSUMED SUSTENANCE FOR SEA-DWELLING CREATURES...

"...OR IF THOU PREFER A SWIFTER END, I COULD ALLOW FOUR OF MY STALLIONS TO REND THEE LIMB FROM LIMB."

SIRE, PLEASE... SHOW ME NO MORE. I CANNOT BEAR IT FURTHER.

BEFORE CASTING ME OUT, HEAR WHAT LOKI HAS TO SAY TO THEE.

I BESEECH THEE, ODIN, FREE ME FROM THIS UNHOLY BONDAGE TO SIGYN. *I BEG THEE!*

AND WHY SHOULD I COMMUTE THY SENTENCE, PRINCE OF MISCHIEF?

BECAUSE I AM THY SON... ADOPTED THOUGH I BE. AND I HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH, AS HATH SIGYN. IF THOU HAST NO PITY FOR ME, SIRE, AT LEAST BE MERCIFUL WITH HER WHO DOTH SHARE MY FATE.

SUFFERED?! THOU HAST *BROUGHT* ONLY SUFFERING AND SHAME SINCE FIRST I DID CLAIM THEE AS A BABE FROM THAT SLAIN STORM GIANT.

I RUE THAT DAY, LOKI.

AYE, ODIN, ALWAYS HAVE I BEEN LITTLE IN THY EYE BECAUSE I WAS NOT A TRUE BLOOD-SON...

...*ALWAYS* IN THE SHADOW OF THOR.

THE THUNDER GOD IS GALLANT WHILE THOU ART COWARDLY... NOBLE WHILE THOU ART DECEITFUL.

THAT HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH BLOOD.

THINK THOU THOSE WORDS DO NOT WOUND... THAT I AM UNTOUCHED BY THY SCORN? I AM WHAT I MUST BE.

FATHER...

MY SON... IN THE PAST THOU HAS COMMITTED GRIEVOUS SINS-- ENOUGH TO WARRANT PUNISHMENT FOR AN ETERNITY. BUT THIS DAY, THY WORDS HAVE TOUCHED MY HEART. I AM FATHER AS WELL AS LIEGE...

...AND I AM A FORGIVING FATHER.

THE CHAINS--THEY HAVE VANISHED! I BE FREE AT LAST! *I BE FREE!*

BUT THY PENANCE IS NOT YET COMPLETE. BECAUSE THE SIGHT OF THEE STILL PAINS ME, I DO BANISH THEE FROM ASGARD--

"--TO AN OUTPOST AT THE REALM'S FURTHEST BORDER. THERE WILL THOU REMAIN, AT MY COMMAND, TO CONTEMPLATE THY MISDEEDS UNTIL RELEASED.

"AND WOE BE UNTO THEE, LOKI, IF THOU ART NOT THERE WHEN I CHOOSE TO LOOK IN ON THEE."

SIRE, LET ME THANK THEE FOR THY MERCY ON BEHALF--

AWAY, SIGYN. THOU, TOO, ART REMINDER OF THE PAIN LOKI BRINGS... THOUGH I HAVE SERARATED THEE FROM HIM.

I WOULD BE ALONE FOR A TIME... ALONE TO KNOW THE SORROW AND REGRET THAT IS THE LOT OF A FATHER...

...WHEN HE HAS LOST A CHILD.

FIN.

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

pollard

WHEN SNOW GIANTS WALK THE EARTH!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

PROLOGUE:

IT'S OFFICIAL! WE'RE NOW EXPERIENCING THE LONGEST SUSTAINED SNOWFALL IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF METEORO-LOGICAL RECORD-KEEPING, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT...

SO LET'S GO TO SOME ACTION-CAM SHOTS SHOWING HOW TYPICAL NEW YORKERS ARE COPING WITH THE BLIZZARD.

IF YOU TRIED DRIVING THIS MORNING, CHANCES ARE YOU'VE LONG SINCE LOST YOUR CAR UNDER SEVERAL TONS OF WHITE STUFF. TRAFFIC IS SIMPLY NONEXISTENT, UNLESS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE SLED, SKI, AND SNOWSHOE VARIETY.

RESOURCEFUL PEDESTRIANS FOUND THAT USING THE TRUNKS, ROOFS, AND HOODS OF PARKED OR STALLED CARS WAS THE EASIEST WAY OF SLOGGING THROUGH THE STREETS.

LEAVING FOR WORK BY THE WINDOW IS ODD ENOUGH, BUT HERE'S THE CAPPER-- HE LIVES ON THE *SECOND FLOOR*.

HIS OCCUPATION, BY THE WAY-- OPERATOR OF ONE OF THE CITY'S FLEET OF SNOW-PLOWS.

IN CENTRAL PARK THEY GREETED THE SNOW WITH SMILES AND PROMPTLY USED IT AS A PLAYTHING. INCREDIBLY ELABORATE SNOW SCULPTURES HAVE SPRUNG UP ALL OVER THE SHEEP MEADOW.

BUT NOW THE WORST PART, FOLKS-- OUR EXTENDED FORECAST CALLS FOR NOTHING BUT MORE AND EVER MORE OF THE WHITE STUFF IN SUPER-RECORD ACCUMULATIONS--

--WITH, SORRY TO SAY, NO LET-UP IN SIGHT.

The SNOW GIANT

THE LAUGH OF LOKI, RESOUNDING THROUGH THE EMPTY OUTPOST'S HALLS, IS ONE PART MANIA, ONE PART RAGE, AND THREE PARTS CRUEL AMUSEMENT...

SO...MY FATHER ODIN THINKS HE CAN END MY THIRST FOR MISCHIEF BY ENFORCING A MONTH-LONG EXILE FROM THE COURT OF ASGARD! 'TIS THE SUPREME JEST!

INDEED, THOUGH I BE HIS ADOPTED SON, ODIN DOES NOT KNOW ME WELL IF HE THINKS I CAN REMAIN IDLE THROUGH AN ENTIRE MONTH OF SOLITUDE!

HA HA HA HA HA

AND WHAT, I WONDER, WOULD ODIN THINK OF *THIS*, MY LATEST MISCHIEF--?!

AYE, THE FORM OF THE MISCHIEF IS ONLY JUST AND FITTING! AFTER ALL--

--IF I MUST ENDURE THE FRIGID ISOLATION OF THIS FORSAKEN OUTPOST--

--THEN WHY SHOULD MY BROTHER--THE NOBLE, *FAVORED* SON--NOT ENDURE THE SAME FOUL WEATHER IN HIS ADOPTED REALM OF MIDGARD?

DOUG MOENCH and KEITH POLLARD
WRITER LAYOUTS

STONE, SEVERIN & MILGROM INKERS | JOE ROSEN LETTERER | GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORIST | JIM SALICRUP EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

AND UNTIL I CONCEIVED OF USING THIS ENCHANTED CRYSTAL TO HARASS THOR--

--THE ONLY SOLACE IN MY PRESENT LOT WAS THAT IT TOOK ME AWAY FROM THE STIFLING YOKE OF MY WIFE *SIGYN*, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY...

EH--THE DOOR! BUT WHO COULD BE HERE-- IN THE REMOTE FASTNESS OF SUCH ISOLATION?!

A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE ENTERING AMIDST THE SWIRL OF STORM, BUT WHO COULD IT--

THE NORN QUEEN *KARNILLA!* BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING *HERE?!*

I HAVE COME, DEAR LOKI, TO PROPOSE AN ALLIANCE OF VENGEANCE.

AND IF I HAVE NO APPETITE FOR IT?

BUT YOU DO. IS NOT THOR THE BANE OF YOUR EXISTENCE?

HAS NOT ODIN BANISHED THEE HERE? AND HAVE I NOT GOOD CAUSE FOR REVENGE AS WELL?

'TIS NOT THE IDEA OF VENGEANCE I REJECT, KARNILLA, BUT THE NOTION OF ALLIANCE WITH *THEE.*

OH? AND WHAT SCHEME ARE YOU NURSING ON YOUR OWN?

THAT SNOW GLOBE--?

IT AMUSES ME.

HAH! TRIFLING MISCHIEF-- BUT MISCHIEF WHICH CAN BE CONVERTED TO A TRUE BLOW OF REVENGE.

THIS *IS*, I TAKE IT, A *CRYSTAL OF TRANS-FERENCE?* WHATEVER YOU CAUSE TO OCCUR WITHIN THE GLOBE--

--ALSO OCCURS TO THE REALITY ON WHICH THE GLOBE'S SETTING IS MODELED?

WITHIN THE LIMITS OF MY SORCERY-- WHICH ODIN HAS CURTAILED.

THE IMAGINATION HAS *NO* LIMITS, LOKI, AND WITH PROPER IMAGINATION THE CRYSTAL MAY BE COMBINED WITH A RESOURCE AT MY DISPOSAL...

...TO SPELL DOOM FOR THOR, AND TO PLACE ALL OF ASGARD UNDER OUR JOINT COMMAND. HAVE YOU HEARD OF... THE PLAGUE CASK?

THE *PLAGUE CASK?!* I BEGIN, KARNILLA, TO *WARM* TO THE NOTION OF ALLIANCE.

"THEN WE MUST BEGIN A JOURNEY, LOKI-- TO THE *ICE CAVES.*"

AND THE SNOW CONTINUES TO FALL ALL THAT NIGHT...

...AND FAR INTO THE NEXT DAY.

STILL THE HEAVENS RELEASE THEIR COLD, SILENT FURY...

AND STILL THE CITY SUFFERS UNDER THE MANTLE OF GLISTENING OPPRESSION.

THE MORTALS HERE ACCEPT IT WITH THE RIGHT SPIRIT, AND FOR THAT THEY ARE TO BE ADMIRED.

YET I FEAR THAT EVEN THEIR SPIRIT WILL SOON BE BURIED--AND THEN NONE WILL BE ABLE TO SMILE, OR SUCCEED AT EVEN THE SIMPLEST TASK.

AS MIGHTY THOR, LORD OF STORMS, I COULD EASILY END IT, BANISHING THE BLIZZARD--

--BUT IT IS NOT MY PLACE TO DO SO.

NATURE MUST BE ALLOWED TO RUN ITS ORDAINED COURSE WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM MY HAND.

INSTEAD, BY THE POWER OF MYSTIC *MJOLNIR*, MINE ENCHANTED URU HAMMER--

--I SHALL TOUR THE BESIEGED CITY--

--AND KEEP WATCH FOR ANY MISHAP IN WHICH I CAN, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, INTERVENE.

YON BRIDGE--SWAYING AND GROANING UNDER THE STRESS OF CONSTANTLY AMASSING SNOW--OBLIVIOUS TO THE TEAM OF MORTAL WORKERS ENDLESSLY TRAVERSING ITS SPAN...

INDEED, THEIR TASK SEEMS LESS THAN FUTILE--AS THEIR PLOWS DESPERATELY MAINTAIN A STASIS OF DEFEAT, NO VEHICLES CAN PASS THE PLOWS THEMSELVES, NOR CROSS THE BRIDGE...

"...BUT AT LEAST THE STRUCTURE WILL NOT COLLAPSE!"

SUDDENLY...

WHAT THE--?! LOOK OUT!!

I CAN'T *TAKE* IT ANY MORE!

TOO MUCH SNOW! IT'S DRIVIN' ME CRAZY! IT JUST KEEPS PILIN' UP! I'LL NEVER BEAT IT-- NEVER FINISH THE JOB! I'LL NEVER GET HOME!

I CAN'T *TAKE* IT!!

HAS THE VEHICLE GONE OUT OF CONTROL? OR HAS THE DRIVER GONE *MAD*?

MEANWHILE, FAR ACROSS THE DIMENSIONAL VOID NEAR LOKI'S HOME IN BANISHMENT...

HERE, LOKI, AT LAST, THE OBJECT OF OUR TREK--

THE *ICE CAVES*...

HERE, THE *PLAGUE CASK*, CONTAINING ALL THE CAPTURED EVILS OF ASGARD, WAS BOUND BY MY SPELLS AGES PAST. HERE IT IS CACHED *STILL*.

BUT NOW THE ICE HAS CLAIMED IT, AND IT WILL REQUIRE OUR COMBINED POWERS OF SORCERY TO *FREE* IT.

SO, KARNILLA, PERHAPS THIS IS THE *TRUE* REASON FOR YOUR PROPOSAL OF ALLIANCE...

...BECAUSE YOU NEED MY AID TO FREE YOUR PRECIOUS BOX OF EVIL?

REFUSE TO AID ME, LOKI, AND YOU WILL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWER.

VERY WELL, NORN QUEEN. LET US FREE THE CASK.

AND SO, EXERTING THEIR SORCEROUS POWERS IN TANDEM, LOKI AND KARNILLA DIRECT MAGIC FIRES AT THE WALL OF ICE...

AT FIRST, THE RIME SEEMS TO ENCASE NAUGHT BUT AN OPAQUE SHADOW OF PROMISE...

...UNTIL THE ICE SLIPS WETLY FREE, REVEALING--

THE PLAGUE CASK, LOKI! ALL THE POWER OF EVIL!

IT IS OURS.

SPAKT

THE BERSERK VEHICLE SKIDS ACROSS THE SLEET, PLOWING OFF THE BRIDGE--

HELLLP!!

--AND PLUNGES TOWARD THE ICY SURFACE OF THE RIVER FAR BELOW.

HERE INDEED IS A *GRAVE* MISHAP IN WHICH I MAY *READILY* INTERVENE!

STRIKING LIKE LIGHTNING, AND WITH GODLIKE STRENGTH THOR SNATCHES THE PLOW FROM ITS FATE...

THE DRIVER RAVES ON...

TRIPLE SHIFTS! BACK AN' FORTH, BACK AN' FORTH ACROSS THAT BRIDGE FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS STRAIGHT!

NO RELIEF AN' NOTHIN' EVER GETS DONE! SNOW JUST KEEPS COMIN'--

--PILIN' UP AS FAST AS YOU CLEAR IT AWAY!

THE SNOW'S *EVIL*, I TELL YA! IT'S GONNA KILL US ALL!

WHILE ABOVE, THE CABLE TO THE TRAMWAY-- WHICH CONNECTS MANHATTAN TO ROOSEVELT ISLAND-- SNAPS!

SPRAK

YA SEE?! THE ICE SNAPPED THAT CABLE! THAT EMPTY TRAM CAR'S FALLIN'! IT'S GONNA HIT THOSE PEOPLE!

NAY, MORTAL. NOT IF MYSTIC MJOLNIR--

RAK!

"-- HITS THE CAR *FIRST!*"

BUT THY MOMENTARY MADNESS, MORTAL, HAS MAYHAP CHANCED UPON SOME TRUTH. THE SNOW *DOTH* BECOME MALEVOLENT.

'TIS TIME TO HALT THE UNEND-ING STORM.

HEAR ME, ELEMENTS OF THE STORM! THE GOD OF THUNDER CALLS UPON THEE!

CEASE THY FURY! CALM THY WINDS! END THY FROZEN TEARS!

WHAT THE...? HEY YOU-- YOU'RE *THOR!*

MY-- MY LIFE WAS JUST SAVED BY-- BY *THOR*--?!

MEANWHILE...

AH, HERE WE ARE. CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF THE MISCHIEF YOU'VE ALREADY BEGUN, LOKI...

...I THINK THE *SNOW GIANT* WOULD BE THE MOST APPROPRIATE CHOICE.

INDEED, KARNILLA, A *CUNNING* CHOICE.

HERE IS THE *CRYSTAL OF TRANSFERENCE.*

LET THE SNOW GIANT PENETRATE ITS ENCHANTED GLOBE--

--TRANS-FERRING HIM TO THE REALITY OF THE SCENE DEPICTED WITHIN.

AYE, LOKI, AND SOON YOUR BROTHER THOR WILL FACE MORE-- *FAR* MORE THAN THE MERE NUISANCE OF FALLING SNOW.

"THE SNOW-- IT STILL FALLS! BUT HOW?! HAVE I NOT COMMANDED IT TO *STOP*? CAN IT BE THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I AM POWERLESS OVER THE ELEMENTS?

"BUT WHY? WHY AM I UNABLE TO EXERT THE CONTROL WHICH IS MY BIRTHRIGHT?

"IS THERE A *HIGHER* HAND AT WORK?

"CAN IT BE THAT ALL-FATHER ODIN HATH--

"NAY, NOT ODIN.' FOR WHAT PURPOSE WOULD HE WORK SUCH DEVILTRY?

"BUT THERE IS ONE OTHER POSSIBILITY-- THE MISCHIEVOUS HAND OF *LOKI!*"

BUT WHETHER 'TIS LOKI'S HAND, OR THE HAND OF SOME OTHER AGENT--

--I MUST FACE A BITTER TRUTH.

MY HAND... HAS FAILED.

YET, THIS I VOW, I'LL NOT REST UNTIL--

BY MY FATHER'S EYE!

'TIS THE *SNOW GIANT*-- THE NORTHLANDS OGRE IMPRISONED IN THE PLAGUE CASK BY ODIN AGES AGONE E'EN BEFORE I WAS SIRED!

COME, MORTAL, I WILL TAKE THEE TO A HOSPITAL BEFORE--

NO! IT WAS THE MONOTONY--

--LIKE BEIN' HYPNO-TIZED--SNOWBLIND-- BUT I'M OKAY NOW! I WANNA *HELP!*

A WHILE AGO, *YOU* WERE BENT ON DESTRUCTION.

I TOLD YA, I WAS SNOW-CRAZY! I JUST NEED A JOLT OUT OF IT!

NEW YORK'S MY CITY! IT JUST GOT TO ME WHEN I WASN'T GETTIN' ANYWHERE CLEANIN' IT UP, BUT I'M OKAY NOW!

VERY WELL. THOU MAYEST AID THY FELLOW MOR-TALS...

...BUT MARK THIS! I ALONE CAN DEAL WITH YON CREATURE! DO NOT INTERFERE!

I'M A CITY-WORKER, PAL! I AIN'T NO *HERO.*

AND SO, AS THE SNOWPLOW DRIVER BEGINS CLEARING PEOPLE FROM THE AREA, THOR CONFRONTS THE BIZARRE SNOW GIANT...

I KNOW NOT WHY YOU HAVE APPEARED, OGRE, BUT I CANNOT LET THEE WORK THY RUIN ON MIDGARD!

MIDGARD, IS IT? I'VE NEVER JOURNEYED TO THE LOWER REALM BEFORE. SMALL WONDER, THEN, THAT IT ALL SEEMS SO STRANGE TO ME. AND WHILE EVEN *I* KNOW NOT WHY I AM HERE, LITTLE ONE, WHO ART *THOU* TO CHALLENGE ME IN SUCH A MANNER?

I AM *THOR*, GOD OF THUNDER AND STORMS, AND SON OF THE ALL-FATHER *ODIN.*

ODIN?! 'TWAS ODIN WHO IMPRISONED ME IN THE DARKNESS OF THAT CURSED BOX! IF YOU ARE HIS SON, PUNY GODLING--

--THEN DEFEND *THYSELF!*

AYE, OGRE, I *SHALL* DEFEND MYSELF!

FRAKK

AND *THOU* HAVE A CARE FOR *THYSELF!*

HAH! THE FIGHT HAS BEGUN, KARNILLA! THOR IS SORELY BESET!

INDEED, LOKI?

MUCH AS *YOU* ARE.

EH--?

TAKE HIM!

NO! BASE TREACHERY! YOU DECEIVED ME, KARNILLA!

EXACTLY.

AND *YOU* ARE HARDLY ONE TO COMPLAIN.

AGH!

AND ON EARTH, AS THOR MOMENTARILY GAINS THE UPPER HAND, TRAGEDY STRIKES! AN ELABORATE SNOW SCULPTURE TOPPLES--

SPOOM!

--TRAPPING TWO HAPLESS VICTIMS UNDER ITS TUMBLING WEIGHT.

HELLLP!!

THAT LADY AN' HER KID-- THEY'RE BURIED!

GOTTA DIG 'EM OUT FAST BEFORE THEY SUFFOCATE!

THANK YOU... THANK YOU...

THE PLOWMAN'S BRAVE EFFORTS HAVE ALLOWED ME TO PRESS MINE ADVANTAGE! STILL, THE BATTLE IS FAR FROM WON!

YOUR MIGHT IS VAST FOR ONE OF THY SIZE, GODLING...

...BUT I SHALL YET DEFEAT THEE, EVEN AS I NEARLY DEFEATED ODIN *HIMSELF!*

SWUMPT

WHAT'S THIS? WAS MY MERE BOAST IN TRUTH A PROPHECY? HAVE I INDEED *ALREADY* DEFEATED THE GODLING?

HE LIES BURIED IN THE SNOW-- BUT *WHERE?*

WHUMP

UNNOTICED BY THE GIANT, THE WHITE CARPET RISES IN A RETREATING FURROW...

*...WHICH POPS OPEN **BEHIND** HIM.*

...WE SHALL *SEE* WHERE THY BOASTING GETS THEE!

HIGH OVER CENTRAL PARK CATAPULTS THE TUMBLING GIANT...

NOW, OGRE...

...SLAMMING TO A STOP SPRAWLED ACROSS PARK AVENUE.

BUT BEFORE THOR CAN PURSUE...

THE POLICE -- GOING AFTER THE OGRE IN THEIR HELICOPTERS.

THEIR WEAPONS WILL HAVE NO EFFECT UPON THE GIANT. I MUST STOP THEM!

HOLD! YOUR EFFORTS WILL ONLY ENDANGER THY FELLOW CITIZENS!

CRIPES! IT'S *THOR!*

N.Y.P.D.

YON OGRE IS *MINE* TO DEAL WITH!

"YON OGRE"? UH, YEAH, SURE... WHATEVER YOU SAY, THOR!

KRAKOOM

SHRK

AND SO THE THUNDER GOD RENEWS THE DESPERATE BATTLE...

WHILE...
HAVE NO FEAR, LOKI.
THE DEMONS ARE BACK INSIDE THE CASK.
WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS, WITCH?!
WHEN YOUR BANISHMENT HAS ENDED, DEAR LOKI--
--ODIN SHALL MAGICALLY TRANSPORT YOU BACK TO COURT!
BUT IN YOUR PLACE I SHALL GO...AND WITH ME, THE CASK'S ARMY OF DEMONS!
FOOL! YOU CANNOT HOPE TO DEFEAT ODIN!
PERHAPS NOT...BUT IF I TAKE ENOUGH OF THE OTHER GODS HOSTAGE BEFORE ODIN IS AWARE OF MY PRESENCE... PERHAPS HE WILL SEE MATTERS MY WAY.
AND NOW, I THINK I SHALL SAMPLE THE AMENITIES OF YOUR QUAINT OUTPOST.
IN THE MEANTIME--
"--YOU MAY AMUSE YOURSELF WITH THE VIEW INSIDE THE CRYSTAL--THE SPECTACLE OF THOR'S ULTIMATE DEFEAT."
NO! THOR'S GETTIN' WASTED!
THAT GIANT'S JUST LIKE THE SNOW--IT WON'T QUIT!
AND AGAIN THE DRIVER SNAPS--BUT THIS TIME, WITH A MEASURE OF CONTROL...
I GOTTA HELP! THAT SNOWPLOW--!
SORRY, PAL--
HEY!
--BUT RIGHT NOW, I NEED THIS BABY MORE THAN YOU!
I SAID I WAS A CITY-WORKER, NOT A HERO, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME TO PROVE MYSELF A LIAR!

WHAMM!!

WHAT'S THIS?

UH-OH.

SOME MANNER OF *TOY*?

DIDN'T EVEN MAKE A DENT IN HIS ANKLE!

A MERE *MORTAL* WHO WOULD ATTEMPT TO TOPPLE *ME*?

WHAT THINK YOU, THOR? SHALL I CRUSH THE PUNY MORTAL FOR DARING SUCH AN AFFRONT--

--OR WILL YOU *YIELD* TO ME, AND LAY DOWN THINE OWN LIFE TO SAVE HIS?

THOU ART A FOOL, MORTAL! I WARNED THEE NOT TO INTERFERE!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, THOR! DO WHAT YA HAVE TO DO! I DON'T MIND DYIN'-- NOT IF IT'LL SAVE THE CITY!

"I REMEMBER THE TALE OF THE SNOW GIANT'S DEFEAT, TOLD TO ME BY MY FATHER ODIN...!"

BUT HOW DID YOU FINALLY DEFEAT HIM, FATHER? WITH THE STRENGTH OF THY SWORD ARM?

YES, THAT AND SOMETHING FAR GREATER-- THE STRENGTH OF MY *WIT*.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, FATHER?

I USED THE STRENGTH OF MINE ARM TO BEAT HIM BACK CEASELESSLY, YES-- BUT I USED MY WIT TO PUSH HIM EVER *SOUTH*, SO THAT HE WEAKENED MORE AND STILL MORE AS THE CLIME *WARMED*.

'TWAS AN EPIC BATTLE, ENDURING WEEKS, BUT IT FINALLY ENDED IN THE HEAT FAR TO THE SOUTH, WHERE THE GIANT EVENTUALLY COLLAPSED IN DEFEAT. FOR, YOU SEE, MY SON--

--A SNOW GIANT IS NOTHING AT ALL... WITHOUT SNOW.

VERY WELL, OGRE. YOU HAVE MY WORD AND OATH. RELEASE THE MORTAL--

--AND I WILL NOT STRIKE ANOTHER BLOW AGAINST THEE.

MEANWHILE...

HOW TO ESCAPE? KARNILLA'S SORCERY IS EQUAL TO MINE OWN. THE BARS WILL NEITHER BEND NOR MELT. THUS, THERE SEEMS NO WAY OUT...NONE AT ALL...

UNLESS... YES! OF COURSE!

'TIS THE ONLY WAY!

AND THOUGH IT WILL PAIN ME TO SO DEBASE MYSELF, I MUST DESCEND TO MIDGARD, EVEN *AID THOR* IF NEED BE...

...FOR THE CRYSTAL IS MY ONLY MEANS OF ESCAPE!

AND THOR WILL BE MY ONLY MEANS OF RETURN TO ASGARD!

WHY'D YA DO IT, THOR? YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BUCKLE UNDER! I TOLD YA I WAS WILLIN' TO--

STAND THEE BACK, MORTAL...

...WHILST *THOR THE MIGHTY* UNLEASHES THE *WISDOM OF ODIN!*

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, LITTLE ONE? *TREACHERY*? YOU GAVE YOUR WORD AS A *GOD!*

NAY, NOT TREACHERY, OGRE! I AM MERELY SEEING TO MY OWN PERSONAL COMFORT!

IT IS TOO *COLD* HERE!

THEREFORE, I SEEK ONLY TO WARM MYSELF!

HEY! TH-THAT'S A *GAS* MAIN!

AYE! IT SHALL PROVIDE FUEL TO BURN...AND I, LORD OF THE LIVING LIGHTNING, SHALL PROVIDE THE SPARK--

--TO *IGNITE* IT!

FWOOSH

THE HEAT! I CANNOT *ENDURE* IT! I MUST FLEE!

FLEE THIS GLORIOUS RESPITE FROM WINTER'S CHILL, LARGE ONE?

NAY! WARMTH IS STUFF OF GOOD CHEER, FRIEND OGRE!

LET ME MAKE IT STILL MORE CHEERFUL!

WHA--?

AHHHGH!

S-STOP! THE HEAT IS TOO MUCH! THOU ART BURNING ALL THE STIFFNESS FROM ME! I AM...

...MELTING!

WHUM

YOU *DID* IT, THOR!

AYE, MORTAL, THE BATTLE IS ENDED...FOR NOW!

BUT THE SILENT SNOW CONTINUES TO FALL AND ITS COLD WILL SOON *REVIVE* THE OGRE, IF...

EH? WHAT'S THIS?

LOKI! THEN IT *WAS* THY HAND WORKING THIS MISCHIEF FROM AFAR!

NAY, BROTHER THOR! 'TWAS NOT MY HAND AT ALL, BUT THE NORN QUEEN KARNILLA'S!

SHE HOPES TO CONQUER ALL ASGARD! I HAVE COME TO ENLIST THY AID IN THE COMMON CAUSE OF STOPPING HER!

BY HEIMDALL'S TEETH, HOW KARNILLA SHALL PAY FOR THIS HUMILIATION!

I BELIEVE THEE FULLY NOT FOR AN INSTANT, BUT I CAN BELIEVE THAT THY REAL PLAN HAS GONE AWRY, FOR NOTHING LESS COULD FORCE THEE TO SEEK MY AID. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?

SIMPLY RETURN ME TO MY NORTHERN OUTPOST IN ASGARD, BROTHER THOR, WHERE I MAY PUT AN END TO KARNILLA'S SCHEME.

I SEE NO HARM IN RETURNING YOU TO YOUR OUTPOST. BESIDES, I WILL SOON RETURN TO ASGARD MYSELF, TO SEE THAT ALL IS WELL. BUT FIRST YOU MUST DO SOMETHING FOR ME.

RID MIDGARD OF YON OGRE BEFORE HE REVIVES TO WREAK HAVOC ANEW.

GLADLY, GOOD BROTHER. WATCH AS MY SORCERY FIRST SHRINKS THE GIANT DOWN IN SIZE...

...AND THEN DRAWS HIM INTO THE ENCHANTED CRYSTAL WITH ME. NOW, 'TIS TIME FOR *THY* END OF THE BARGAIN. TAKE ME TO ***BIFROST***, THE RAINBOW BRIDGE LEADING TO ASGARD.

WHIRLING HIS MIGHTY URU HAMMER, THOR SENDS THE SNOW ASWIRL...

...AND THEN...

HOLY SMOKES! THEY'RE GONE!

AND, IN A NEVERLAND DEEP IN THE COSMOS...

THE RAINBOW BRIDGE, LOKI! I HAVE GRANTED THY REQUEST. BUT HEAR ME WELL...

SHOULD THOU EVER AGAIN WORK THY MISCHIEF UPON MIDGARD, I WILL COME FOR THEE, UNDERSTOOD?

AYE, BROTHER, UNDERSTOOD.

THEN *BEGONE*, MY WICKED BROTHER, BACK TO THY OUTPOST OF BANISHMENT...

"...IN THE FAR MOUNTAINS OF ICE!"

WH-WHAT IS THAT SOUND OUTSIDE?

SOMETHING SCREAMING DOWN FROM THE SKY?!

KRASH

LOKI! BUT HOW?!

BY ENTERING THE CRYSTAL, DEAR KARNILLA, AND BY PULLING THE CRYSTAL AFTER ME, *INTO* ITSELF... AND BY DEBASING MYSELF BEFORE WRETCHED THOR! YOU HAVE MUCH TO ANSWER FOR...

WERE IT NOT FOR OUR COMMON GOAL, I SHOULD DESTROY YOU RIGHT NOW!

AS IT IS--

--I'M OF A MIND TO UNLEASH THE PLAGUES UPON THEE--

--UNLESS YOU LEAVE ME TO THE PEACE OF MY BANISHMENT AT ONCE!

NO, LOKI! I'LL GO! I MEANT TO RELEASE YOU, TO MAKE YOU MY CONSORT, IN FACT, AFTER I HAD CONQUERED ODIN AND--

BEGONE, WITCH!

AND SO, THANKS TO LOKI'S RETURN, ODIN IS SPARED AN ATTACK UPON HIS AUTHORITY...

AND, WITH THE SHATTERING OF THE CRYSTAL...

THE SNOW HAS STOPPED! *FINALLY!*

YOU... YOU DID IT, THOR! IT'S OVER!

GUESS I BETTER GET BACK TO MY BRIDGE. THEY'LL BE WONDERIN' WHAT HAPPENED TO--

NAY, NOT TO THE BRIDGE, MORTAL...

...TO THE HOSPITAL, WHERE I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THEE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

M-MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT... NOW THAT YA MENTION IT, I *AM* A BIT WOOZY... GIDDY... LIKE A KID, Y'KNOW? THEN AGAIN, MAYBE IT'S JUST THE SNOW.

SNOW *ALWAYS* SEEMS TO MAKE EVERYONE ACT LIKE A CRAZY KID.

NEXT

BEWARE the BOMBARDIERS!

50¢ CC

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

BEWARE THE BOMBARDIERS!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard...,

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

BILL MANTLO STORY | RICK LEONARDI ART | CHIC STONE INKS | JOE ROSEN LETTERS | GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORS | JIM SALICRUP EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WITH A HIGH WHINE OF POWERFUL TURBINE ENGINES, THE ROCKET-CAR SCREAMS DOWN THE SHADOWED STREETS OF MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE.
WEST END AVENUE
BEWARE THE BOMBARDIERS!

AT WEST 94TH STREET, IT TURNS...

W 94TH ST

CURB YOUR DOG

THERE'S TONIGHT'S TARGET-- THE SAVOY HOTEL.

HIT IT.

SAVOY HOTEL

GEARS ARE SHIFTED, AND RUBBER SCREECHES ON BLACKTOP.

INSIDE THE RUNDOWN LODGING, MAX YADOW SITS WITH HIS SOLE SURVIVING FRIEND.

QUIET NIGHT, AMOS.

EH?

SHREEEEEEEEEE

SAVOY HOTEL

BEEP BEEP

IT'S SOME STRANGE KIND OF CAR, AMOS.

SSHRE

COMING RIGHT AT US!

MEEOWWRR!

EEEEEEEE

EEEEEEEEOOOOOMMM!

SAVOY HOTEL TRANSIENTS WELCOME

RAMMED HARD, ANCIENT BRICK AND MASONRY CRUMBLES.

CONCUSSION CANNONS COMPLETE THE DEMOLITION.

PWOOH

PWOOM

ITS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, THE MURDER MACHINE SPROUTS STEEL WINGS --

REEEE

--AND SCREAMING SKYWARD, SLIPS INTO THE NIGHT.

NOT LONG AFTER, YET MUCH TOO LATE...

OH, MY--! TERRIBLE! TERRIBLE!

ANYBODY MAKE IT OUT ALL RIGHT?

A FEW--THE FAST ONES.

MROWR...?

MAX YADOW WAS TOO OLD TO BE FAST.

THE WESTSIDE MEDICAL CENTER, BROADWAY AND 99th STREET...

NURSE MORGAN, WHY ARE THESE PEOPLE IN THE HALLS?!

YOU'VE ONLY JUST ARRIVED, DR. BLAKE -- BUT IT'S BEEN THIS WAY ALL MORNING. THERE AREN'T ANY MORE ROOMS. WE'RE PROVIDING THE BEST TEMPORARY CARE WE CAN UNTIL THESE POOR SOULS CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL.

WHAT HAPPENED? THESE PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING FROM FRACTURES, BURNS--!

THEY WERE CAUGHT IN THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD SAVOY HOTEL, DOCTOR.

YOU MEAN A BUILDING -- WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN IT -- JUST *FELL DOWN*?!

THAT'S WHAT THE POLICE SAID, DR. BLAKE.

NO! EYES LIKE THE DEVIL -- SCREAMING LIKE A SOUL IN TORMENT!

IT'S COMING RIGHT AT US, AMOS! IT'S...

HE'S DEAD, DR. BLAKE -- FROM SHOCK. HE MUST HAVE BEEN DELIRIOUS...

BLAKE, STEP INTO MY OFFICE FOR A SECOND. THERE'S SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO SEE YOU.

EYES FIXED ON THE AGED FACE ANGUISHED EVEN IN DEATH, DR. DONALD BLAKE ABSENT-MINDEDLY CRADLES MAX YADOW'S CAT IN HIS ARMS AS HE TURNS TO FOLLOW HIS EMPLOYER, LIONEL JEFFRIES.

SORRY YOU HAD TO START WORK THIS WAY, DOCTOR.

MEEOWR!

SOON...

THIS IS DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT BYRD OF THE 24th PRECINCT, BLAKE. HE'S BEEN ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE THE SAVOY'S COLLAPSE.

CALL ME *BLACKBYRD*, DOC. EVERYONE ELSE DOES.

I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR FORMALITIES, LIEUTENANT. I WALKED IN THE DOOR TO REPORT FOR WORK AND A PATIENT DIED RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES.

FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS IN THAT WAITING ROOM, HE MAY HAVE ONLY BEEN THE FIRST OF MANY... UNLESS I GET BACK OUT THERE.

SORRY TO HEAR THAT, DOC. BUT, IT DOES PUT THIS CASE INTO A DIFFERENT LIGHT... MOVIN' IT OUTTA THE HANDS OF THE ARSON SQUAD TO *MY* DEPARTMENT--

--*HOMICIDE!*

HOMICIDE? *MURDER?!* I THOUGHT THE SAVOY JUST CAUGHT FIRE AND COLLAPSED!

OTHER WAY AROUND, DOC. THE OLD PLACE WAS *KNOCKED DOWN*-- THEN *SET* ON FIRE.

THE LIEUTENANT SUSPECTS THAT A HIGHLY-ORGANIZED GROUP OF GANGSTERS EXISTS WHO HIRE THEMSELVES OUT AS A DEADLY EFFICIENT WRECKING CREW TO UNSCRUPULOUS SLUMLORDS...

...WHO FIGURE TO MAKE MORE MONEY COLLECTIN' ON THEIR INSURANCE POLICIES THAN THEY DO COLLECTIN' RENT.

Y-YOU MEAN, THOSE PEOPLE OUT THERE ARE INJURED... DYING--

--BECAUSE THEIR LANDLORD COULDN'T MAKE A PROFIT ON HIS BUILDING??!

THAT'S LIFE IN THE BIG CITY, DOC.

MWROWR!

SECONDS LATER, IN THE CORRIDOR...

MIND, IT'S ONLY A THEORY, DOC-- BUT THERE'S BEEN A PATTERN OF SUSPICIOUS 'DISASTERS' ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE.

I'VE GOTTA DO SOME CHECKIN'-- TRACK DOWN THE OWNERS' NAMES.

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU FIND OUT, BLACKBYRD.

EXIT

WHY, DOC? YOU AN AMATEUR HARDY BOY IN YER SPARE TIME?

JUST CALL IT... PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY.

HUNGRY, PUSS?

MEEOW!

MORNING SLIPS INTO LATE AFTERNOON IN AN ENDLESS SUCCESSION OF X-RAYS TO BE EXAMINED, BONES TO BE SET, BANDAGES TO BE CHANGED, TRANSFUSIONS TO BE MONITORED, AND TRANSFERS TO MORE ADEQUATE INTENSIVE CARE FACILITIES AT NEARBY ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL TO BE EFFECTED.

WESTSIDE MEDICAL CENTER

IT IS AN EXHAUSTING SCHEDULE, AND DON BLAKE IS READY TO COLLAPSE WHEN AN AIDE CALLS OUT...

TELEPHONE, DR. BLAKE.

THIS IS THE LAST ONE, DEXTER.

TAKE YOUR CALL, DON.

BLACKBYRD! WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND OUT?!

A LIST OF REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS OWNED BY THE LANDLORD OF THE SAVOY. AN', YEAH, THE OTHER BUILDINGS DEMOLISHED IN THE SAME WAY WERE HIS, TOO.

HOUSING & REAL ESTATE RECORDS

LOOKS THAT WAY. THE GUY OWNS ONE MORE HOTEL. IT MAY BE HIT NEXT.

WHERE IS IT?

YOUR PATTERN, BLACKBYRD!

367 WEST 112th STREET. WHY?

ROOF ACCESS DOOR

WHAT'S UP, DOC? YOU PLANNIN' ON MAKIN' A BEFORE-THE-FACT HOUSE CALL?

DOC? DOC?!

FOR A LAME MAN, DR. DONALD BLAKE MOVES WITH REMARKABLE SPEED.

SOON, ON THE CLINIC'S ROOF...

WHEN I TOOK MY HIPPOCRATIC OATH I SWORE TO SAVE LIVES--

--BEFORE THEY BECAME ENDANGERED, IF POSSIBLE.

HOWEVER, SINCE THERE'S NOT MUCH A LAME DOCTOR CAN DO...

HIS SOUL THRILLS WITH EXPECTATION A SECOND BEFORE HIS WALKING STICK STRIKES THE ROOF...

...AND THE SKY ANSWERS WITH LIGHTNING AND THUNDER AS AN INCREDIBLE TRANSFORMATION TAKES PLACE!

ROWRR!

THE MIGHTY THOR STRIDES THE EARTH ONCE MORE!

THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT DRAW NIGH-- AND 'TIS IN DARKNESS THAT DEEDS MOST FOUL ARE DONE!

THOR MUST AWAY! EH?

MEEOW

THOR HALTS HIS MIGHTY MALLET IN MID-SWING.

WHAT'S THIS? DOST THOU SEEK TO STAY ME IN MY FLIGHT OF VENGE-ANCE, CAT?

NO, TO ACCOMPANY ME! ODD'S BLOOD!

'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE, BUT I SEE AN INTELLIGENCE IN THIS ANIMAL'S EYES-- AND A DESIRE TO BE PRESENT WHEN THE SON OF ODIN METES OUT JUSTICE TO ITS MASTER'S MURDERERS!

COME THEN, CREATURE! THE GOD OF THUNDER WILL NOT DENY THE LONGING IN YOUR SOUL! TONIGHT THOU SHALT FLY WITH THOR!

THE LIGHTS OF A GREAT METROPOLIS TWINKLE ON FAR BELOW THEM, BEACONS IN THE NIGHT.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE CITY LIGHTS ALSO ATTRACT OTHERS -- MURDEROUS MOTHS WHOSE ONLY INTENT IS TO SNUFF OUT THE FLICKERING ELECTRIC FLAME OF A CERTAIN ANCIENT EDIFICE...

HOTEL

TONIGHT'S TARGET?

ROUTINE, ANOTHER RUNDOWN OLD HULK WORTH MILLIONS IN INSURANCE MONEY.

NO ONE'LL MISS IT -- ESPECIALLY ITS OWNER.

THAT'S WHY HE HIRED US -- THE *BOMBARDIERS!*

THERE IT IS, COMING INTO VIEW THROUGH THE *ROCKET-CAR'S* WIND-SHIELD.

BELNORD ARMS

THE BELNORD ARMS, BUILT IN 1891 AS A LUXURY APARTMENT BUILDING.

DIED, 1981... OF *OLD AGE!*

SSSSHHRRREEEE

NO!

SMASH!

UPLIFTING!

SOMETHING'S STRUCK US!

IT DEFLECTED US OFF-COURSE!

NOT SOME-THING--SOME-ONE!

THOR!

ARMS

YOU MEAN ONE GUY WITH A HAMMER KNOCKED US OUT OF THE SKY??!

ONE 'GUY' WHO COMMANDS THE THUNDER AND RAIN--AND WHOSE MYSTIC, DWARF-FORGED MALLET, MJOLNIR, RETURNS EVEN NOW TO HIS READY HAND!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

WHAT DO YOU THINK? THE MIGHTIEST AVENGER OF THEM ALL HAS JUST HIT US-- AND WE'RE STILL IN ONE PIECE!

THAT MEANS OUR ROCKET-CAR'S GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO STAND UP TO THE GOD OF THUNDER! REV THE ENGINES! *RAM HIM!*

METHINKS THE BATTLE IS ABOUT TO BE JOINED, CAT! IN THIS CLASH THOU HAST NO PLACE! GET THEE GONE--

--WHILE THOR DOES WHAT MUST NEEDS BE DONE!

AS THE MIGHTY MURDER MACHINE BEARS DOWN ON HIM, THE SON OF ODIN BEHOLDS THE GLARING HEADLIGHT BEAMS AND THE ROCKET-CAR'S THUNDEROUS ROAR--

--AND HE REMEMBERS AN OLD MAN'S DYING WORDS: "EYES LIKE THE DEVIL-- SCREAMING LIKE A SOUL IN TORMENT!"

STRAM!

WHAT IN BLAZES--!

BEHOLD, MORTAL-- MEN WHO WOULD KILL FOR PAY!

JZORD ARMS

LAST EVENTIDE THEY DESTROYED ANOTHER LODGING! TONIGHT, 'TIS YOURS THEY SEEK TO LEVEL!

BUT FIRST WE'RE GOING TO LEVEL YOU, THUNDER GOD!

HARD TO DIG THE LONGHAIR'S LINGO, BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S TALKIN' ABOUT THAT SAVOY DISASTER!

CRIPES! I BET HE MEANS THE BELNORD'S NEXT! I'D BETTER--! HUH? A CAT ON THE PHONE?

YEAH, THAT'S IT-- I GOTTA CALL THE COPS!

MWOHR!

FIRE MINI-MISSILES!

THEY'LL PUNCH HOLES IN HIM!

AS THE BOMBARDIERS UNLEASH THEIR DEADLY BARRAGE, THE NIGHT SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR PLACES A CALL--

--TO THE NEARBY 24th PRECINCT.

BLACKBYRD HEAR-- I MEAN, *LIEUTENANT* BYRD, HOMICIDE

SHEESH, IT AIN'T BEEN SO LONG SINCE I REJOINED THE FORCE. I STILL FORGET PROTOCOL.

HOUSING

WHAT? A RUCKUS AT THE BELNORD?! I'M ON MY WAY...!

EVEN OVER THE PHONE BLACKBYRD RECOGNIZED THE SICKENING SHRIEK OF ARMOR-PIERCING MISSILES RACING TOWARDS THEIR TARGET!

HE SOUNDS AN ALERT, STRAPS ON HIS SHOULDER-HOLSTER, AND PRAYS HE DOESN'T ARRIVE TO FIND THE BUILDING REDUCED TO RUBBLE!

BUT WHAT HE CAN'T SEE--AND THE CALLER NEGLECTED TO TELL HIM, IS THAT THE BELNORD ARMS HAS A **GUARDIAN!**

MINI-MISSILES CAN'T GET THROUGH AS LONG AS THOR HOLDS HIS HAMMER!

WE CAN'T DISARM HIM! THE BLASTED THING ALWAYS COMES BACK TO HIM! BUT WE CAN **BIND** HIS ARMS SO HE CAN'T TOSS IT!

FIRE WRAPAROUND-ROCKETS!

ODIN'S BEARD! YON VILLAINS DO SEEK TO 'SNARE ME WITH SNAKING CABLES!

'TIS MADNESS TO THINK THERE BE A METAL MAN-MADE CABLES TO BIND THE GOD OF THUNDER! I NEED ONLY FLEX MY MUSCLES, AND--!

ARMS

WHAT WITCHCRAFT IS THIS?! THE BINDINGS HOLD!

NAY, THEY GROW EVEN TIGHTER STILL--PINNING MINE ARMS TO MY SIDE!

THAT'S BECAUSE--LIKE OUR ROCKET-CAR--THE WRAP-AROUND CABLES ARE MADE OF AN ALLOY OF ADAMANTIUM...

THE STRONGEST METAL KNOWN TO MAN!

BELNORD ARMS

HIT HIM WHILE HE'S DOWN!

4

CRASH!

MOMMA, WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?

S-SOME MEN FIGHTIN' IN THE HALLWAY, DARRYL! STAY INSIDE!

ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE CORRIDOR, DOORS OPEN AND FRIGHTENED FACES PEER OUT! THOR LOOKS PAST THEM, TO THEIR HOMES -- THEIR NARROW ROOMS AND PITIABLE POSSESSIONS!

'TIS SOUL-RENDING, THIS SPECTACLE OF POVERTY! THESE PEOPLE HAVE NOTHING SAVE THE ROOF ABOVE THEIR HEADS--

--AND THESE BOMBARDIERS WOULD DEPRIVE THEM OF EVEN THAT!

DEPRIVE THEM IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR HOMES SEEMS A HORRIBLE HAPPENSTANCE...

...FOR WHICH NO ONE, NOT THE BOMBARDIERS NOR THE LANDLORD WHO EMPLOYS THEM, IS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE!

IT IS SAID THAT THE ANGER OF A GOD IS BEYOND RESTRAINT!

THOR SAYS THEE NAY, BOMBARDIERS!

THOU SHALT NOT WREAK THY DE-STRUCTION ON THIS HOUSE!

THE REST OF YOU HOLD HIM WHILE I REACH THE ROCKET-CAR!

HOLD HIM? HOW?!

HIS HAMMER'S RETURNING TO HIM LIKE A THING ALIVE!

LOOK OUT! HE'S THROWING HIS HAMMER!

SPAK

THAK

TKLANG

HE'S DRIVING US BACK OUT OF THE HOTEL!

MEOW!

SUDDENLY, A SIREN-WAILING SQUAD CAR ARRIVES ON THE SCENE...

THE COPS!

VERILY, VILLAINS! NOW YOU ARE CAUGHT BETWIXT A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE.

LAY DOWN THINE ARMS AND SURRENDER TO YON GUARDIANS OF THE LAW.

ARE YOU KIDDING? WE'VE *KILLED* PEOPLE, MAN!

IT'S MY DUTY TA TELL YA THAT ANYTHIN' YA SAY MAY BE HELD AS EVIDENCE AGAINST YA...

...SCUM!

TO BLAZES WITH THAT! I'M BLASTING OUT OF HERE!

NAY! GET THEE TO COVER, BLACKBYRD! I SHALL DEAL WITH THESE VERMIN!

I GOT THE MESSAGE, BLONDIE!

DIE, FLAT-FOOT!

BUT HOW'D THAT LONG-HAIRED HERO KNOW MY *NAME*?!

MEEOWRR!

THUNDER

THOR THANKS THEE, CREATURE! THY WARNING WAS MOST TIMELY! WHILE THE GOD OF THUNDER DID BATTLE THE OTHER BOMBARDIERS, THEIR LEADER SOUGHT TO SLAY ME FROM BEHIND!

COME AHEAD, COWARDLY ONE! LET THE MECHANICAL MIGHT OF YOUR DEVIL-MACHINE BE MATCHED AGAINST THE STRENGTH OF MY THEWS...AND LET US *SEE* WHO PREVAILS!

BUT...

THE ROCKET-CAR'S SWERVIN' AWAY FROM THOR! HE'S TAKING OFF WITHOUT US!

THAT'S RIGHT, TURKEYS! IT LOOKS LIKE YER BOSS IS TAKIN' A POWDER AN' LEAVIN' YOU TA PLEA-BARGAIN!

I ♥ NY BUY EPIC! MDeA FAZZONE D79

WITH THEIR LEADER'S BETRAYAL, THE FIGHT HAS GONE OUT OF THE BOMBARDIERS! THEY SURRENDER TO BLACKBYRD--

--BUT THEIR LEADER IS *MINE!* HE'LL NOT ESCAPE!

UNNH!

AGAIN I AM STRUCK BY ALL THE FORCE OF THIS VEHICLE'S ROCKETS!

CAN EVEN *MY* STRENGTH STOP IT? CAN IT *BE* STOPPED? 'TIS MADE OF A SUBSTANCE AKIN TO THE METAL FROM WHICH THE EVIL ULTRON WAST FORGED! *

*ULTRON... THE ARCH-FOE OF THE AVENGERS - JIM.

THOUGH SEVERAL TIMES HAVE THE AVENGERS VANQUISHED ULTRON BY TRICKERY, NEVER WAS I ABLE TO OVERPOWER HIM BY STRENGTH ALONE!

NOW I AM DRIVEN BACK BY A MECHANICAL MURDER-MACHINE OF A SIMILAR CONSTRUCTION-- AND IF I FALL, INNOCENT LIVES ARE FORFEIT!

AGAIN THE HIGH WHINE OF TURBINE ENGINES SCREAMS IN THE CANYONS OF THE CITY, AND INCH BY BONE-BREAKING INCH THE GOD OF THUNDER IS FORCED BACK AGAINST UNYIELDING BRICK!

THE ROCKET-CAR IS AT FULL-THRUST--YET IT'S NOT MOVING! THE THUNDER GOD IS HOLDING HIS GROUND!

IT CANNOT BE! NO MAN, MORTAL OR IMMORTAL, COULD POSSESS SUCH POWER!

DEMOLITION CHARGES

THE BOMBARDIER PRESSES A STUD...

...AND A DEADLY FUSILLADE ERUPTS FROM THE ROCKET-CAR'S NOSE GUNS AT THE MIGHTY THOR!

PWOOM

BALDER'S BLADE, THE PAIN--! YET I DARE NOT ABANDON MY POSITION TO SILENCE THE GUNS LEST THE ROCKET-CAR SWEEP PAST AND DEMOLISH THE VERY EDIFICE I AM SWORN TO PROTECT!

UNNOTICED BY THOR, A LITHE SHAPE LEAPS TO THE VEHICLE'S HOOD...

4802

...AND A DARK-SKINNED DETECTIVE, HIS CAPTIVES UNDER GUARD, WHIRLS WITH REVOLVER IN HAND!

BLONDIE'S IN TROUBLE! I GOTTA DO SOMETHIN' TO HELP HIM OUT!

POW POW POW

BUT WHAT? THAT WHOLE BLAMED CAR'S CONSTRUCTED OUTTA SOME KINDA INDESTRUCTIBLE METAL! IF THOR'S HAMMER CAN'T BUST THROUGH IT, WHAT GOOD ARE BULLETS GONNA...?!

WAIT A MINUTE! THE *CAR'S* MADE OUTTA METAL-- BUT THE *WINDSHIELDS* AIN'T!

*IT IS SAID OF BLACKBYRD THAT HE NEVER MISSES! AND, THOUGH, INDEED, THE WINDSHIELD HE FIRES AT IS MADE OF THE TOUGHEST, BULLETPROOF, CLEAR RESINS KNOWN, IT HAS BEEN **WEAKENED** BY THE CAR'S PREVIOUS BATTERING BY A CERTAIN ASGARDIAN MALLET--*

SHRAK

MEEOWR!

WINDSHIELD'S BEEN SHOT OUT--AND SOMETHING'S LEAPING IN! LEAPING FOR...

...MY EYES!!

FLIGHT-ROCKET CONTROL

SCREAMING, THE BOMBARDIER FALLS BACK ONTO THE ROCKET-CAR'S FLIGHT CONTROL!

IMMEDIATELY, SLEEK ADAMANTIUM-ALLOY WINGS UNFOLD FROM THE SIDES OF THE EBONY MURDER-MACHINE!

AT FULL THRUST, THE ROCKET-CAR STRAINS TO SOAR FREE OF THE SURFACE AND UP INTO THE SKY!

CRIPES! HE ALMOST CAUGHT HIS OWN BOYS IN THE BACKWASH!

THE VILLAIN HAS LOST CONTROL OVER HIS CRAFT, POLICEMAN! SEE HOW E'EN NOW IT STRAINS TOWARDS THE SKY?!

AIRBORNE THEN SHALL IT BE!

THOR! SOON AS THE HEAD HONCHO ABANDONED HIS BUDDIES, THEY SPILLED THE BEANS ABOUT THE LANDLORD WHO HIRED THEM AND ABOUT THE ROCKET-CAR!

IT'S CARRYIN' ENOUGH EXPLOSIVES TA TOTAL THE BOROUGH!

THEN EVEN DIRECTIONLESS, YON CRAFT POSES A DEADLY PERIL TO ALL!

UP AND AWAY FROM ITS TARGET!

THOR SHALL SEEK IT OUT, BLACKBYRD, AND END ITS MENACE FOR ALL TIME!

HOW *DOES* HE KNOW MY NAME?!

SOON, HIGH ABOVE THE CITY...

STILL THE MURDER-MACHINE CLIMBS-- SEEMINGLY WITHOUT PLAN OR PURPOSE!

EH? THE PILOT--! HE IS *DEAD*--APPARENTLY *ELECTROCUTED* WHEN HE FELL AGAINST YON PANEL OF INSTRUMENTS!

AND THERE, I SURMISE, IS THE AUTHOR OF HIS DESTRUCTION!

COME, LITTLE ONE--THOU HAST ACHIEVED THY PURPOSE! YOUR MURDERED MASTER HATH BEEN AVENGED!

YON BOMBARDIER WILL NE'ER BE A MENACE AGAIN!

THE EXPLOSION FLARES LIKE A NEW STAR A'BORNING IN THE HEAVENS, AND SHATTERS WHATEVER SLEEP REMAINS IN THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT!

'TIS DONE, DE-TECTIVE.

THE EXPLOSIVES WERE POWER-FUL ENOUGH TO DESTROY EVEN THAT AWESOME CRAFT!

SO, WHEN THEY BLEW, *IT* BLEW.

AN' WE GOT THE GOODS ON THE LANDLORD ALL NEAT AN' CLEAN, AS IF SOMEONE WROTE IT IN A STORY.

'TIS A TALE RICH WITH IRONY, BLACKBYRD--NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH BEING THAT A VILLAIN WAS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE...

...BY AN OLD MAN'S FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND.

MEEOW!

-END-

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THE MIGHTY

THOR™

pollard

THE MAELSTROM TO MEPHISTO!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

DOUG MOENCH — WRITER
KEITH POLLARD & GENE DAY — ARTISTS
JOE ROSEN — LETTERER
GEORGE ROUSSOS — COLORIST
JIM SALICRUP — EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER — EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE MAELSTROM TO MEPHISTO

IT BEGINS AS A STUDY IN CONTRAST BETWEEN THE MAJESTIC AND THE MUNDANE.

ABOVE--A GOLDEN-HAIRED GOD FROM ASGARD SOARING THROUGH THE SKIES...

AND BELOW--A COMMON MUGGING IN THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN...

IT WILL END WHEN THE MUNDANE IS SUPPLANTED BY THE DEMONIC, WITH A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE STRONGEST CONTRASTS KNOWN TO MAN.

BUT FOR NOW, THE MUGGING IS EVIL ENOUGH...

LET GO O' THE PURSE, LADY!

NO! I JUST CASHED MY SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK! I NEED THAT MONEY TO EAT!

C'MON, MAN, WE GOT THE PURSE! LET'S GET OUTTA--

KABOOM

WHAT THE--?!!

KNOW THIS, MORTALS--SHOULD YE PERSIST IN THY STORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST YON INNOCENT WOMAN...

...THEN SO TOO SHALL I UNLEASH A STORM OF RETRIBUTION!

H-HOLY CRUD--!

IT...IT'S HIM--!

IT'S THOR!!

YOU FACE A GRAVE CHOICE AT THIS MOMENT-- PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHOICE OF ALL THY DAYS...

IT COULD PROVE TO BE THE TURNING POINT BETWEEN A LIFE OF NOBILITY AND AN EXISTENCE OF EVIL AND DEGRADATION...

...JUST AS YOU HAVE ALREADY DEGRADED THIS HELPLESS WOMAN!

CHOICE--? Y'MEAN YA AIN'T GONNA CLOBBER US WITH THAT HAMMER-- AIN'T EVEN GONNA TAKE US IN TO THE COPS?

THE FACT THAT I FACE MY OWN CHOICE OF WHAT TO DO WITH THEE DOES NOT NEGATE *YOUR* CHOICE. THOU CANST RETURN THE WOMAN'S MONEY, AND THUS CHANGE THY APPROACH TO LIFE...

...OR YOU CAN GO ON AS YOU HAVE, AND SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.

YEAH? WELL, IF WE GOT A CHOICE, THAT MEANS WE AIN'T NECESSARILY GONNA SUFFER NO CONSEQUENCES, RIGHT? SO--

BUT BEFORE THE LEADER OF THE YOUNG MUGGERS CAN GO ON...

SKREEE

NYPD POLICE

HE'S SHOOTING AT US!

BRAM BRAM

RETURN THE FIRE!

BRAM

N.Y.P.D.

TRY TO HIT ONE OF THEIR TIRES--!

BAMM

SKREEE

LOOK OUT! THE CAR'S GONNA HIT THOSE KIDS!

RUNCH

KRAK

DIDJOO SEE *THAT*?! HE USED HIS HAMMER TO BOUNCE THAT CAR RIGHT OVER THE KIDS AND STRAIGHT INTO HIS HANDS!

WHAMP

YEAH-- AND NOW THE HAMMER'S COMIN' RIGHT BACK TO HIM!

I NEVER SEEN NOTHIN' LIKE IT!

NICE GOIN', THOR-- IF WE'D SEEN THOSE KIDS WE NEVER WOULD HAVE RISKED THE GUNFIRE...

YOU SAVED OUR LIVES, THOR! YOU REALLY ARE A HERO-- JUST LIKE THEY SAY!

THOR SMILES BUT BRIEFLY...

...BEFORE TURNING A STERNER COUNTENANCE ON THE YOUNG MUGGERS...

THY CHOICE REMAINS. YOU CAN CHOOSE TO FOLLOW *HIS* EXAMPLE, TAKING PRIDE IN THYSELF...

...OR YOU CAN FOLLOW *HIS* PATH--

P.D.

--DOOMING THYSELVES TO A LIFE OF HOPELESSNESS, VIOLENCE, AND ULTIMATE PUNISHMENT.

CHOOSE.

I...WELL, I GUESS I...

HERE, LADY. I'M SORRY.

IF INDEED HEARTFELT, THY CHOICE IS MOST WISE.

AND, IN A WORLD BEYOND THE FARTHEST BORDER OF IMAGINATION YET CLOSER THAN THE NEAREST NIGHTMARE, *MEPHISTO*-- LORD OF THE DARK UNDERWORLD -- REACTS WITH DISPLEASURE...

NO! STILL THE THUNDER GOD INTERFERES WITH THE INNATE EVIL OF MANKIND, SEEKING TO GUIDE THEM TOWARD A GLORY WHICH IS NOT THEIR EARNED RIGHT!

WHILE MAN REMAINS A MERE EDUCATED SAVAGE, MY RANKS OF THE DAMNED ARE SWELLED TO OVERFLOWING...

THUS, NOTHING MUST BE ALLOWED TO *CHANGE* THE UNTHINKING MASSES OF HUMANITY! FOR, SO LONG AS THEY REMAIN HOSTILE AND CONSUMED WITH GREED AND HATRED, THEN SO LONG SHALL THE FINAL VICTORY-- ON THE DAY OF ARMAGEDDON-- BE *MINE!*

BUT IF THROUGH DIVINE INTERVENTION THEY SHOULD BE CHANGED-- THEIR SPIRITS EXALTED, THEIR PETTY SOULS UPLIFTED BY THE EXAMPLE OF A NOBLE GOD COME DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS-- THEN THE BALANCE IS UNFAIRLY TIPPED, AND MY VICTORY IN THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE ENDANGERED!

AND THOR-- AS EVEN NOW REVEALED IN THE *MYSTIC VAPORS*-- HAS LONG *CHEATED* IN THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE, EMPLOYING DIRECT INTERVENTION IN THE AFFAIRS OF MORTAL SOULS!

MANKIND MUST BE LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES, TO RISE OR FALL ON THE STRENGTH OR WEAKNESS OF ITS OWN MORAL IMPERATIVES-- AND UNDER SUCH UNSULLIED CONDITIONS *I* AM DESTINED TO WIN!

BUT NOW, SINCE THE THUNDER GOD HAS CHOSEN TO INTERFERE ONCE TOO OFTEN--

"--THEN SO SHALL *MEPHISTO, LORD OF EVIL*, WORK HIS OWN WAYS OF INTERFERENCE!"

NIGHT IN NEW YORK...

...AND A MOMENT OF CHOICE...

SO EASY...JUST BREAK THE GLASS...GRAB...AND RUN...

MEYERS JEWELRY STORE

BUT IT'S WRONG! HOW CAN I--

GO AHEAD--DO IT! WHAT HAS LIFE EVER GIVEN *YOU*--?

MEYERS JEWELRY STO

WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED BY OBEYING PETTY LAWS CREATED BY MEN JUST AS FALLIBLE AS YOU?

THE INSURANCE WILL PAY FOR IT! YOU'LL BE HURTING NO ONE! THE OWNER OF THE JEWELRY STORE IS WEALTHY BEYOND IMAGINING! HE CAN SPARE IT!

AND FINALLY, POSSESSED BY EVIL YET COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF THE VOICE AT HIS SHOULDER--

KRASH

YES--I'LL DO IT!

--THE MAN FORSAKES ALL CONSCIENCE, AND FLEES FROM THE SHAME OF HIS OWN ACT.

BUT EVEN NOW, HE IS DEAF TO THE MANIACAL LAUGHTER SOUNDING ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE BURGLAR ALARM.

ELSEWHERE ON THE BLOCK, IN A TENEMENT BASEMENT...

SURE, I NEED THE INSURANCE MONEY, BUT WHAT IF SOME OF THE TENANTS DON'T GET OUT IN TIME? WHAT IF THEY BURN TO--

THEY DESERVE IT! IF THEY PAID THEIR RENTS, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO DO IT! IT'S THEIR OWN FAULT!

THEY'VE DESTROYED YOUR BUILDING, TURNED IT INTO A WRETCHED TENEMENT, DESTROYED PROPERTY VALUES, WIPED YOU OUT FINANCIALLY!

YOU DESERVE THE INSURANCE MONEY--

--AND THEY DESERVE TO BURN! *DO IT!!*

YES!

WHOOM

AND THE FLAMES CACKLE AND WHINE... ALMOST SATANI-CALLY.

BACK ON THE STREET...

HEY, LET'S SHAG THE HONKIE FOR FUN...

HE'S MINDIN' HIS OWN BUSINESS-- LEAVE HIM BE, DIDN'T DO NOTHIN' TO US...

BUT HE *HAS* DONE SOMETHING TO YOU...

HIS ENTIRE RACE HAS OPPRESSED YOU -- LYNCHINGS, TERRORISM, SLAVERY!

HIS RACE HAS TURNED YOU INTO ANIMALS --

--SPAT ON YOU, LAUGHED AT YOU, TORN YOUR FAMILIES APART, USED YOUR WOMEN AS CHATTEL!

GET HIM! BEAT THE HONKIE!!

AND SO ENSUES THE LONG NIGHT OF ANARCHY, VIOLENCE, CHAOS...

THE BLOCK SEEMS TO ERUPT IN THE SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION OF SHEER, NAKED EVIL.

L'S

AND LAUGHING MEPHISTO PRESIDES OVER IT ALL, EVERY BEATEN WIFE, EVERY SHATTERED WINDOW, EVERY DROP OF SPILLED BLOOD, HIS PRESENCE EVERYWHERE, HIS VOICE LIKE A BUZZING FLY TRAPPED IN THEIR EARS -- AND YET HE IS UNSEEN AND UNFELT, AND THEREIN LIES HIS GREATEST EVIL OF ALL...

YON FLAMES--!

--RISING FROM THE SAME STREET WHERE I EARLIER CONFRONTED THE YOUTHS!

AND THERE THEY BE E'EN NOW--

--RIOTING AMIDST THEIR FELLOW MORTALS!

WHAT MADNESS POSSESSES THEE?! YOU FACED THE CHOICE EARLIER, AND CHOSE RIGHTLY!

IT WAS *YOUR* CHOICE, CREEP-- NOT *OURS!*

EXCELLENT! THE MYSTIC VAPORS REVEAL THAT THOR HAS BEEN PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE!

NOT ONLY HAVE I TIPPED THE SCALES BACK INTO BALANCE, BUT I AM NOW ON THE VERGE OF ACHIEVING MY *TRUE* GOAL--

--THE FINAL ELIMINATION OF THE THUNDER GOD HIMSELF!

AND SO... IT IS TIME TO BRING THE DRAMA TO ITS CONCLUDING ACT!

EH--?! THE ENTIRE STREET-- IT TREMBLES AS IF IN THE FIERCE GRIP OF AN *EARTHQUAKE!*

FWAROOM!

BY ODIN'S EYE--'TIS TRUE MADNESS INDEED!

NOW, THE STREET LITERALLY ERUPTS...

...ITS LENGTH SPLIT IN TWAIN...

...AND THE WHOLE OF THE MOB, WHOSE SOULS HAVE SO RECENTLY TURNED TO EVIL, SLIDES DOWN INTO THE REACHING EMBRACE OF HELLFIRE.

ALL IN THE TWINKLING OF A SATANIC EYE.

THEN, JUST AS QUICKLY--IT ENDS.

THE GROUND IS STILL ONCE MORE...!

BUT THE MORTALS--THEY ARE GONE--SWALLOWED BY THIS GAPING RENT IN THE EARTH'S CRUST...

...AND THERE!--STILL FALLING DOWN THE CHASM, AS IF TOWARD *INFINITY!*

I KNOW NOT WHAT HATH TRANSPIRED, BUT--AS THE POWER OF ASGARD IS MINE TO COMMAND--MY CHOICE IS CLEAR!

I MUST ENDEAVOR TO SAVE THE MORTAL SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAVE VANISHED!

TRUE, THEY HAD TURNED INTO SAVAGES--BERSERK MONSTERS--BUT SURELY SOME SUPERNATURAL AGENCY WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR TRANSFORMATION...

YES! THE PIT--IT DOTH END IN SOME SWIRLING SEA OF FIRE!

IT *MUST* BE THE CONSTRUCT OF SOME UNKNOWN MAGICK...

UNLESS...COULD THIS IN TRUTH BE THE NATURAL BLOOD OF THE EARTH ITSELF--

--THE MOLTEN MAGMA OFT-TIMES SENT FORTH BY VOLCANOES? IF SO--

NO! THE MOLTEN FIRES HAVE DISAPPEARED! AND I... I AM SURROUNDED BY SOME UNIMAGINABLE GULF OF UNREALITY...

...TRANSPORTED 'TWIXT DIMENSIONS AND SENT--

WHERE? WHERE AM I? WHAT IS THIS FOUL PLACE OF JAGGED ROCK AND SMOKING, STIFLING STYGIAN DEPTHS--?!

HADES, GOD OF THUNDER.

EH--?

YOU ARE IN HADES, LAND OF THE WOEFUL DAMNED, THE ETERNALLY DARK REALM OF--

MEPHISTO--?!!

YES, THUNDER GOD, AND WITHIN THIS REALM *I RULE*-- ALL OTHERS WHO ENTER ARE LOST FOREVER!

FOR I AM THE POWER-- AND I AM THE PLAN--AND MINE IS THE KINGDOM OF NAKED EVIL! WE MET ONCE BEFORE, THUNDER GOD, AND YOU THWARTED MY PLAN TO ENSLAVE YOU FOR ETERNITY...*

BUT WHY HAST THOU *BROUGHT* ME HERE--?

YOU CANNOT IMAGINE HOW MUCH I LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS *SECOND* MEETING!

*IN THOR #204 & 205-- JIM.

TO FLAUNT THE INNOCENT SOULS OF THOSE SEIZED FROM THE STREET ABOVE--? TO WITNESS THY ADDITION OF THESE PALTRY FEW TO THY LEGIONS OF THE DAMNED--?

NO, THUNDER GOD, NOT FOR THAT ALONE. MEPHISTO MOVES IN DEVIOUS WAYS. EARTH, THE ABUNDANT SPAWNING GROUND FROM WHICH I PEOPLE MY DOMAIN --

--IS THREATENED BY THE NOBILITY YOU HAVE FORCED UPON IT!

BY INTERVENING IN MORTAL AFFAIRS, YOU HAVE CHEATED IN THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE!

THUS, YOU MUST BE ELIMINATED ONCE AND FOR ALL!

TAKE HIM, MY SERVANTS!

SLAY HIM!!

DARKEN HIS AURA OF GODHOOD FOREVER!!

BUT THOR THE MIGHTY, SON OF IMMORTAL ODIN, SCION OF THE REALM ETERNAL-- HAS **OTHER** IDEAS...

BACK, MONSTERS! THOR SAYS THEE NAY!!

AS THOU MAYST SEE FOR THYSELF, MEPHISTO...

...YOU MUST DO BETTER THAN THAT...

...IF YOU TRULY HOPE TO STEAL THE LIGHT FROM MINE EYES.

BUT OF COURSE, THE FIGHT WAS A MERE DIVERSION, STAGED PURELY FOR ITS AMUSEMENT VALUE. IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE START...

...THAT MY PUNY SERVANTS WOULD INEVITABLY *FAIL* AGAINST YOUR PRODIGIOUS MIGHT.

YOU SEE, THUNDER GOD, I KNEW ALL ALONG THAT THE REAL BATTLE WOULD BE--

--BETWEEN *US.*

I WARN THEE, MEPHISTO! KNOW THAT THOR THE MIGHTY IS BORN OF ASGARD AND POSSESSED OF IMMORTAL BLOOD...

THOU MAYST *NEVER* SLAY ME, DEVIL!

NO...? WE SHALL SEE...

*AGAIN THE FLAMES CACKLE AND WHINE, AS IF ANXIOUS TO PERFORM MEPHISTO'S LAUGHTER **FOR** HIM...*

AND THE ROCK FLOOR, TOO, IS SWIFT TO RISE TO ITS MASTER'S BIDDING...

IT GRASPS ME--!

--LIKE LIVING SERPENTS--

--SEEKING TO HOLD ME FAST SO THAT MEPHISTO HIMSELF MAY REACH ME WITHOUT OPPOSITION--!

BUT THE POWER OF MINE URU HAMMER, MYSTIC *MJOLNIR*--

--CANNOT BE STIFLED BY *ANY AGENCY!*

SHOOM

NOR, FOR LONG, CAN THE STRENGTH OF MINE OWN SINEWS BE THWARTED!

FRAKT

VERY WELL, THUNDER GOD, IF YOU CAN *FIND* ME... AND *ME ALONE!*

NOW, MEPHISTO, LET THE BATTLE TRULY BE STAGED BETWEEN ME AND THEE ALONE...WITHOUT THE AID OF EXTERNAL FORCES...

NO--!

THERE BE TOO MANY OF THEM TO COUNTER AT ONCE!

AGAIN I MUST TRUST TO THE POWER OF MYSTIC MJOLNIR, WILLING THE HAMMER TO *FLY TRUE...*

"...SEEING THROUGH THE FALSE IMAGES...

"...AND SEEKING OUT THE *TRUE* FORM OF MEPHISTO--"

AGH-H!

--BEFORE RETURNING FAITHFULLY TO MY GRASP!

I ADMIT TO A CERTAIN SURPRISE AT THE EXTENT OF YOUR RESOURCEFULNESS...

WELL DONE, THUNDER GOD...

BUT NOW, PERHAPS YOU WILL ALSO CONCEDE A CERTAIN MEASURE OF CHAGRIN...

...AT THE EXTENT OF *MY POWERS!!*

THRONK

NAY, DEMONSPAWN! I WARN THEE *AGAIN*...

THOU CANST *NOT* END THE LIFE OF A GOD-- *WHATEVER* SIZE YOU CHOOSE TO *ASSUME!*

NO--? AND IS THAT WHY YOU ANSWER MY ATTACK WITH MERE *WORDS*--?!

KRAHH

OR CAN IT BE THAT YOU ARE IN TRUTH POWERLESS AGAINST THE FULL DIMENSIONS OF MY EVIL--?!

NAY, MEPHISTO, IT *CANNOT* BE.

SPABOOM

'TWAS MERELY AN ATTEMPT TO OFFER THEE *MERCY*-- BEFORE METING OUT THY INEVITABLE *PUNISHMENT!*

AND NOW--?

AND NOW... I...

...I SEE THAT YOU HAVE SPOKEN THE TRUTH, THUNDER GOD...

YOU CANNOT BE SLAIN BY MY HAND...

...AT LEAST NOT AS YOU ARE *NOW*...

AND SO...I WILL INSTEAD SLAY THE SOULS OF THOSE I HAVE STOLEN FROM THE STREET ABOVE!

NO!!

A PITY YOU DID NOT *AGAIN* WILL YOUR HAMMER--

KRUMP

--TO SEE THROUGH MY *FALSE IMAGE!*

SEIZE THE HAMMER! *HOLD IT!*

AND THE HANDS REACH FROM THEIR PRISON OF ROCK TO OBEY...

NOW, THUNDER GOD, COMMAND THE HAMMER TO RETURN TO YOUR GRASP IF YOU *DARE*--BUT KNOW THAT IT WILL RIP ASUNDER THE ROCK WHICH BINDS THEIR TRAPPED SOULS TO LIFE!

NO! I WILL GO TO THE HAMMER *MYSELF--!*

WILL YOU--?

EVEN THROUGH A WALL OF RAGING HELLFIRE?!

I SAID I CANNOT SLAY YOU AS YOU ARE-- BUT THE MYSTIC VAPORS HAVE SHOWN ME WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ARE DEPRIVED OF THE HAMMER FOR MORE THAN 60 SECONDS...

NO! MUST FIGHT THROUGH THE FLAMES--

--ELSE I WILL REVERT TO *MORTAL FORM!*

I MUST HAVE THE HAMMER *BACK--!*

MUST REACH IT BEFORE--

NO! TOO LATE! THE 60 SECONDS HAVE EXPIRED-- I'VE TRANSFORMED TO THE MORTAL DR. DONALD BLAKE--!

AND THE HAMMER HAS REVERTED TO BLAKE'S WALKING STICK!

INDEED, PITIFUL THUNDER GOD-- AND NOW YOU *CAN* BE SLAIN BY MY HAND!

GROVEL!

BEG AT MY FEET!

NO! RELEASE THEM! YOU KNOW YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO THEM--THEY WERE CLAIMED BEFORE THEIR TIME!

RELEASE THEM, MEPHISTO-- AND CLAIM *ME* IN THEIR PLACE! I OFFER MYSELF IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR SOULS!

A *JOKE* IN THE FACE OF DEATH?! YOU OFFER *ONE SOUL* FOR SO *MANY*--?!

BESIDES, YOU ARE ALREADY MINE, YOU AND ALL THE REST, AS WELL AS MANY OF THOSE STILL ABOVE...

...NOW THAT YOUR INFLUENCE HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR LIVES!

THE LEADER OF THE YOUNG PURSE-SNATCHERS HAS WATCHED THE ENTIRE STRUGGLE, HEARD BLAKE'S OFFER OF SACRIFICE... AND NOW, MOLTEN TEARS WELL FROM HIS EYES...

CAN'T LET IT BE... NOT AFTER ALL HE'S DONE-- TRIED TO DO-- FOR *ALL* OF US!

I'VE GOT TO *FIGHT THE OTHERS*...

...HARDER...WITH *ALL MY STRENGTH*...

...UNTIL I CAN *RIP THE STICK FREE!*

THOR! I MIGHTA STUMBLED A BIT UP THERE, BUT I MADE THE *CHOICE*, MAN--

--AND I'M GONNA STICK TO IT!

HERE--SHOW HIM WHO'S BOSS AS FAR AS *WE'RE* CONCERNED!

WHAT?!!

BLAKE INSTANTLY SLAMS THE STICK DOWN, STRIKING BRIMSTONE...

BOOM

...AND THOR THE MIGHTY IS REBORN-- WITH A VENGEANCE!

NOW, DEVIL-- NOW THOU HAST PROOF THAT THESE SOULS HAVE BEEN FALSELY CLAIMED...

...FOR AT LEAST ONE OF THEM HAS OVERCOME THY EVIL AND DOES NOT BELONG HERE!

BEFORE YOU STRAIN MY PATIENCE TO ITS END, RELEASE YON INNOCENTS--

--OR WE SHALL DO BATTLE, THOU AND I, THROUGHOUT ALL ETERNITY!

A NEVER-ENDING STRIFE WITHOUT SURCEASE-- WITH NO QUARTER ASKED AND NONE GIVEN!

MAKE THY CHOICE, DEMON!

I...I--

AND DENY IF THOU WILT THE LIE OF MY UNFAIR INTERFERENCE-- FOR THOU HAST LONG INTERFERED IN THE WAYS OF MAN THYSELF--

--OFFERING UNENDING TEMPTATION, EXTENDING THE LURE OF EVIL LIKE A BARBED HOOK CONCEALED IN A MORSEL OF SWEETNESS!

WE ARE TWO OF A KIND, THOU AND I, YET EVER OPPOSED AS NIGHT OPPOSES DAY!

SO WHAT SAY THEE? DO WE OPPOSE ONE ANOTHER RIGHT HERE-- FOREVER?!

NO, THUNDER GOD... IT HAS ENDED. THOUGH I MAY BE DEFEATED, AS YOU HAVE PROVEN THIS DARK DAY-- LIKE YOU, I MAY NEVER BE SLAIN MYSELF, MY EVIL NEVER TRULY VANQUISHED...

AND SO IT MUST END... IN STALEMATE.

SO BEGONE, THUNDER GOD -- AND TAKE WITH YOU THESE SOULS I HAVE WRONGFULLY SEIZED!

WORK YOUR NOBLE WAYS UPON THE WOEFUL, DESPERATE MILLIONS OF EARTH...

"...WHILE I WORK MY DARK WAYS FROM HERE BELOW, YET NEVER FARTHER THAN A WHISPER FROM ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE EVER PONDERED EVIL...

WE... WE'RE BACK!

YEAH -- RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MESS WE MADE... BUT WHAT HAPPENED --? I... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING...

...EXCEPT WANTING TO SMASH AND DESTROY... AND THEN... IT'S ALL A BLANK...

MADNESS HAPPENED, MORTALS.

YEAH, WE ***MUSTA*** GONE CRAZY SOMEHOW... AND THERE SURE IS A LOT OF CLEANIN' UP TO DO...

YOU SAID IT -- AND MAYBE THE BEST WAY TO START IS BY EACH OF US CLEANIN' UP OUR OWN ACT.

WELL SAID, MORTAL... WELL SAID.

"MAYBE SO, THUNDER GOD, BUT HEAR ***MY*** FINAL WORDS -- HEAR THEM AND ***DOUBT***...

"...FOR FINAL VICTORY IN THIS MATTER SHALL STILL BE DETERMINED BY HE WHO SERVES THE ***STRONGER FORCE!***"

NEXT: "GRIEF MORE THAN A GOD MAY BEAR"

PLUS AN ALL-NEW TALES OF ASGARD EPIC!

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

pollard

CRISIS IN THE INNER CITY!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

GRIEF MORE THAN A GOD MAY BEAR

AN HOUR AFTER DAWN THE TEMPERATURE IS ALREADY 86 DEGREES AND STILL CLIMBING. THOR HEADS FOR DR. DONALD BLAKE'S APARTMENT AND THE START OF A NEW DAY...

HAVE I MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE, I WONDER, IN CHOOSING MIDGARD OVER ASGARD-- EARTH OVER THE SHINING REALM ETERNAL?

OR HAVE I IN TRUTH MERELY SUCCEEDED IN WIDENING THE GULF BETWIXT THE TWO SIDES OF MINE SOUL?

DOUG MOENCH WRITER | KEITH POLLARD LAYOUT ARTIST | GENE DAY EMBELLISHER | JOE ROSEN LETTERER | GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORIST | JIM SALICRUP EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FOR, HOW CAN THE SOUL OF AN IMMORTAL GOD UNDERSTAND THE FLEETING NATURE OF MORTAL MAN? AND HOW MAY THE SOUL OF MAN BEAT IN THE HEART OF A GOD?

'TIS A RIDDLE FIT FOR HEIMDALL, GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE SPANNING EARTH AND ASGARD--AND HEIMDALL SELDOM SPEAKS.

YET THE RIDDLE VEXES ME--FOR I BE BOTH MAN *AND* GOD.

OR, AT THE HEART OF IT, ARE BOTH ACTUALLY THE SAME?

IN THUNDER, HAMMER BECOMES WALKING STICK...

...AND MIGHTY THOR--

--BECOMES THE LAME PHYSICIAN, DR. DONALD BLAKE.

QUESTIONS I FEAR I'LL NEVER ANSWER--AND MAYBE IT'S NOT EVEN WISE TO ASK THEM.

I'M FATED TO REMAIN BOTH BLAKE *AND* THOR.

AND MAYBE IT'S THE VERY CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO WHICH MAKES ME, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, WHAT I *TRULY* AM.

OFTEN CONFUSED... BUT NEVER DOUBTING.

AND BLAKE ENTERS THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE...

...WHERE, A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...

HOLD IT, SON! WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE?

M-ME? NOTHIN', MAN... I JUST--

SALE

STEAK

THEN C'MERE AND SHOW ME!

NO! GOTTA GET AWAY!

BUSTAPOLIS

LIQ

STOP! THIEF!

HELP! POLICE! STOP THAT KID! HE WAS STEALIN' FROM MY STORE!

COME ON-- HAVE TO LEAVE THE CAR-- TAKE HIM ON FOOT!

HOLD IT, KID! STOP!

HARRY KRAMER BUYS KITCHEN

SOLD OUT

MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF, KID! THE ALLEY'S A DEAD-END-- YOU CAN'T GET AWAY!

BUT STILL THE YOUTH FLEES, ALL LEGS AND ELBOWS, PUMPING, SWIFTLY PUMPING...

...UNTIL--

MY... CHEST!

HE'S STOPPING!

ALL RIGHT-- FREEZE!

WATCH HIM-- HE'S REACHING INTO HIS JACKET!

HE'S GOT A WEAPON!

BRAM

NO-- WAIT!

WHAT DID YOU DO, SIMMONS?! I DIDN'T SEE ANY WEAPON!

BUT HE... HE REACHED INTO HIS JACKET--!

YEAH, BUT HE'S JUST A KID...

NOTHING-- NOT EVEN A PEA-SHOOTER.

IT CAN'T BE-- NO! THEN WHAT WAS HE REACHING FOR?!

NEVER MIND THAT-- HE'S HURT BAD!

ZECK GOES ZANY

NO TIME FOR AN AMBULANCE, BUT THERE'S A CLINIC JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY-- WE'LL TAKE HIM IN THE PATROL CAR!

THE DAY IS HOT; A CROWD HAS ALREADY BEEN DRAWN TO THE MOUTH OF THE ALLEY...

WHO'D YA NAIL-- PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE?

YOU HEAR? THEY SHOT THAT KID FOR NO REASON!

N.Y.P.D. 35

...AND THE PATROL CAR IS LUCKY TO ESCAPE.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, PIGS -- DID HE THREATEN YA WITH A *SLINGSHOT*?!

AT THE CLINIC MINUTES LATER, BLAKE AND THE CAR ARRIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY...

LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE.

SKREECH

BETTER GET INSIDE.

I MIGHT BE NEEDED.

EXIT

YOUR REPORT CAN WAIT, OFFICERS. I MIGHT BE FORCED TO HANDLE THIS EMERGENCY CASE MYSEL--

DR. JEFFRIES, CAN I--

BLAKE! THIS ONE IS YOURS -- THE REST OF THE STAFF IS ALREADY INVOLVED IN OTHER SURGERY.

GOOD THING YOU GOT HERE.

AND SO...

READY, NURSE?

YES, DR. BLAKE. HIS VITAL SIGNS ARE NONE TOO STABLE, BUT THEY WON'T BE GETTING ANY BETTER.

DO YOU KNOW THE PATIENT'S NAME, OFFICER?

HE HAD THIS WALLET ON HIM-- JIMMY SAYERS, 73 99th STREET, AGE 13...

THIRTEEN. OH, NO...

OUTSIDE, THE CROWD HAS FOLLOWED THE HEAT AND THE HEAT HAS LIT THE FUSE...

--DIDN'T EVEN TAKE THE KID TO A REAL HOSPITAL--

-- JUST THIS LOUSY CLINIC WHERE THEY SEND *ALL* THE TRASH!

WHAT THE--? THAT'S A RIOT BREWING OUT THERE! WHAT SET 'EM OFF SO FAST?

WHO KNOWS? THE WEATHER.

WE'D BETTER GET TO THE CAR AND RADIO FOR HELP BEFORE THEY GET ANY UGLIER.

BUT THE MERE SIGHT OF POLICE BLUE INFLAMES PASSIONS EVEN FURTHER...

PIG BRUTALITY! CHILD-KILLERS!

...AND THE FUSE BURNS OUT OF ROOM.

TAKE THE CLINIC!

TAKE IT OVER SO THEY DON'T GET AWAY WITH IT WITH-OUT NOBODY NOTICING!

KID-KILLERS!

THIS IS CAR 63--OFFICERS IN DISTRESS! *HURRY!*

OCCUPY THE CLINIC!

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?! YOU CAN'T COME IN HERE AND--

JUST BE COOL, BIG DOCTORS! NOBODY WANTS TO HURT NOBODY!

EXIT

WE JUST WANT THAT BOY'S LIFE SAVED--AND WE WANT THE MEDIA TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! SO YOU JUST GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS WHILE *WE* TAKE OVER THE CLINIC'S PUBLIC RELATIONS!

JOE, YOU CALL CHANNEL 3 NEWS. MARY, YOU CHECK THE ADMISSIONS RECORDS--FIND OUT THE BOY'S NAME AND NOTIFY HIS FAMILY.

RIGHT ON.

NURSE, GO SEE WHAT ALL THAT NOISE IS OUT THERE.

ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR, AS SOON AS I--

THE CLINIC HAS BEEN OCCUPIED, BUT DON'T PANIC. AS LONG AS WE REMAIN CALM, I DON'T THINK THERE'LL BE ANY--

OCCUPIED? BUT *WHY?*

YOU'RE WORKING ON THE REASON RIGHT NOW, DR. BLAKE--

--AND I SUGGEST YOU SUMMON ALL THE SKILLS YOU COMMAND TO MAKE SURE THAT BOY DOES NOT BECOME A MARTYR.

A COMMENDABLE ATTITUDE.

JUST SEE THAT YOU BACK IT UP WITH RESULTS.

I ASSURE YOU, DR. JEFFRIES, THAT *WHOMEVER* MY PATIENT IS, I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF WITHHOLDING *ANY* OF MY SKILLS.

OUTSIDE, A CROWD OF A DIFFERENT COLOR GATHERS-- TO FIND THE OCCUPATION OF THE CLINIC COMPLETE...

JIMMY SAYERS VICTIM OF POLICE BRUTALITY

--ANOTHER RIOT SQUAD ON THE WAY, AND WE GOT THE TWO ARRESTING OFFICERS. THEY'VE BOTH BEEN ROUGHED UP.

IT ALL HAPPENED SO *FAST*, CAPTAIN. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO STOP THEM, THE MOB MUST'VE BEEN STIRRED UP BY A FEW PEOPLE WHO WITNESSED THE SHOOTING...

BRING 'EM HERE. I WANT SOME ANSWERS.

YEAH, THE SHOOTING. WE'LL DISCUSS *THAT* LATER, PATROLMAN...

"RIGHT NOW, WE GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES ON OUR HANDS-- THERE'S A *NEW* MOB GATHERING BEHIND THE BARRICADES, MEANING WE'D BETTER GET THE OCCUPIERS OUT OF THAT CLINIC *FAST!*"

POLICE LINE

POL

MDC

MDC

THIS IS CAPTAIN OAKLAND OF THE WEST SIDE TASK FORCE! WE UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN! THE INCIDENT WILL UNDERGO A FULL INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW, I ASSURE YOU!

YEAH -- A REVIEW BY OTHER COPS!

LEAVE THE CLINIC NOW WHILE YOUR ACTION CAN STILL BE CONSIDERED MINOR! REFUSE, AND YOU'LL BE CHARGED WITH TAKING HOSTAGES!

WE'RE THE HOSTAGES, BROTHER -- HOSTAGES TO YOUR LAWS OF THE STREETS -- HOSTAGE TO UNDERSTAFFED, UNDEREQUIPPED CLINICS LIKE THIS ONE!

YOU GONNA SHOOT US TOO? AIN'T ENOUGH *ROOM* IN THIS PITIFUL CLINIC FOR *ALL* OF US!

JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS!

STAND YOUR GROUND -- BUT EXERCISE EXTREME RESTRAINT!

JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS!

HERE'S THE BULLET, NO DAMAGE TO MAJOR ARTERIES. ONCE WE STOP THE BLEEDING, HE SHOULD PULL THROUGH. HOW'S HIS HEART?

SLOW BUT STEADY, DOCTOR.

GOOD. LET'S SEW HIM UP.

JIMMY! MY JIMMY! THEY CALLED ME-- SAID HE WAS HERE! HE AIN'T BAD--NOT REALLY! I *TRIED* TO STOP HIS STEALIN'...

HIS MOTHER! IT'S THE BOY'S *MOTHER!* LET HER THROUGH!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE! KEEP YOUR DISTANCE! WE DON'T WANT TO USE THE TEAR-GAS, BUT--

TEAR-GAS?! IT'S THE BOY'S MOTHER, YOU PIGS! HIS *MAMA!!*

STAY CALM! HOLD YOUR FIRE!

THAT'S ALL WE CAN DO FOR NOW-- JUST HAVE TO WATCH OVER HIM AND WAIT. THANKS FOR ATTENDING.

EXCELLENT SURGERY, DOCTOR.

THANK YOU, NURSE, IF YOU'LL STAY, THE OTHERS CAN LEAVE.

NOW TO SEE WHAT ALL THE NOISE IS--

OH, NO-- IT'S FAR WORSE THAN JEFFRIES INDICATED!

--TAUNTING THE POLICE FOR SOME TIME, THEIR TEMPERS FLARING IN THE HEAT--

--AND THEY HAVE NOW BEGUN HURLING DEBRIS...

TOO LATE FOR TEAR-GAS NOW-- THEY'RE TOO CLOSE AND THE BREEZE IS BLOWIN' THE WRONG WAY.

IT WAS *ALWAYS* TOO LATE FOR IT-- JUST TRIED TO BLUFF 'EM WITH THE THREAT.

NO GUNS! IF THEY PRESS ANY CLOSER, USE YOUR NIGHT-STICKS ONLY-- AND ONLY IN DEFENSE!

IT COULD ERUPT INTO SERIOUS VIOLENCE AT ANY MOMENT, THE BOY HIMSELF MAY NOT DIE, BUT OTHERS *MIGHT*--IF SOMETHING ISN'T DONE TO QUELL THE RAGE AND FEAR OUT THERE...

STAY HERE AND MONITOR THE PATIENT, NURSE.

BUT DOCTOR--!

I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I CAN!

I'VE DONE ALL I CAN AS BLAKE.

NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE *OTHER* SIDE OF MY SELF TO TAKE THE MATTER IN HAND...

TIME...

...FOR...

BOOM

...THOR THE MIGHTY--

--GOD OF THUNDER AND LORD OF STORMS!

AND THE WINDS BEGIN TO HOWL.

JIMMY! I'VE GOT TO SEE MY JIMMY! SOMEBODY HELP ME SEE MY BOY!

YEAH! PUSH THOSE COPS BACK! MAKE WAY FOR HER!

DRAW YOUR NIGHTSTICKS AND STAND FIRM! HERE THEY--

BOOOM

WHAT THE--?! A *THUNDER STORM?!* BUT THERE AIN'T A CLOUD IN THE SKY!

STAND THEE FAST, MORTALS!

THY VIOLENCE IS NOT THE WAY!

THOR! IT'S THE THUNDER GOD *THOR!!*

--EVEN NOW, AS WE REPORT LIVE FROM THE SCENE, A DRAMATIC NEW FIGURE HAS ENTERED THE TENSE CONFRONTATION--THE MAJESTIC FIGURE OF THE GOLDEN-HAIRED AVENGER KNOWN AS *THOR!*

I WISH I COULD CONVEY THE VIBRANT SENSE OF ELECTRICITY CREATED BY HIS ADVENT, BY HIS--WAIT! HE'S GOING TO SPEAK!

PERHAPS OUR MICROPHONES CAN PICK UP HIS WORDS...

VIOLENCE HAS *CAUSED* THY CONFLICT!

RESORTING TO MORE OF THE SAME IS SHEER FOLLY!

WILT THEE FUEL THE FIRES OF VIOLENCE WITH MORE *HATE?* WILT THEE RISE UP IN BITTER ANGER ONLY TO IGNITE AN EVER GREATER CONFLICT IN THE DAYS TO COME?

THOR SAYS TO THEE . . . *NAY!*

DON'T YOU COME UP IN *OUR* FACES, GOLDIE! AUTOMATICALLY TAKIN' SIDES WITH THE COPS-- JUST ANOTHER FAIR-HAIRED HONKIE!

AND THE TWO SIDES SURGE FORTH--

--THREATENING TO BRIDGE THE GAP OF HATE.

AGAIN THY WEAPONS ARE RAISED! THEN SO BE IT!

KNOW THAT MINE URU HAMMER CANST *ALSO* BE RAISED!

MJOLNIR ***STREAKS*** *DOWN THE GAUNTLET OF WEAPONRY.*

AT SPEEDS SUCH AS THIS, GENERATED BY HURRICANES, SINGLE STRAWS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO PENETRATE SOLID OAKS. SMALL WONDER, THEN, THAT THOR'S HAMMER SUCKS THE WEAPONS INTO THE PATH OF ITS VORTEX...

AT THE END OF THE GAUNTLET, STILL DRAGGING THE WEAPONS BEHIND, THE HAMMER MAKES ITS MYSTIC TURN--

--SNAPPING BACK INTO THOR'S WAITING HAND.

THE WEAPONS CLATTER IN A HEAP BEFORE HIM.

NOW, MORTALS, SINCE YOU SO STRONGLY DESIRE THE POWER OF A WEAPON--

--I WILL GIVE IT TO THEE!!

THE HAMMER SLAMS, IN THUNDER.

INSTANTLY, THE PILE OF WEAPONS IS PULVERIZED... VAPORIZED...

...AND THE VERY STREET ITSELF-- CONCRETE, CREOSOTE, EARTH, AND THE BED-ROCK BENEATH-- SPLITS ASUNDER.

I...I DON'T BELIEVE IT! HE'S CRAZY-- A MANIAC!!

THAT CLOWN JUST DESTROYED CITY PROPERTY! WHY DOESN'T HE MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS?! WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS RABBLE OURSELVES!

HEAR ME, MORTALS! YOU HAVE JUST WITNESSED A DISPLAY OF GREAT POWER AND AWESOME VIOLENCE!

IT HAS INSPIRED NOTHING BUT FEAR IN THEE --AND ANGER TOWARD THE WIELDER OF THAT POWER AND VIOLENCE!

ANGER TOWARD *ME!*

YOU LOOK UPON ME AS A STRANGER-- AN ALIEN IN THY MIDST-- AND THAT IS THY GRAVEST MISTAKE!

THOUGH DIFFERENT WE BE IN DEGREES, THOU AND I, WE ARE YET THE SAME!

AND, TOO, YOU COMPOUND THE ERROR BY LOOKING UPON EACH OTHER AS STRANGERS, AS ALIENS, AS MEMBERS OF TWO SEPARATE RACES!

BUT I SAY TO THEE... THOUGH DIFFERENT, *THOU ART THE SAME!*

MISTAKES HAVE BEEN MADE ON BOTH SIDES, FOR THOU ART MORTALS AND FALLIBLE-- BUT MUTUAL PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE MISTAKES IS A FALSE GOAL--

PREVENTION OF FURTHER MISTAKES IS THY ONLY TRUE GOAL-- AND MINE AS WELL!

SOME STILL RESPOND IN ANGER, WHILE OTHERS GROW MORE RECEP-TIVE TO THE MESSAGE ...BUT ONE, IT SEEMS, HAS NOT EVEN HEARD...

MY BOY... GOT TO LET ME SEE HIM ...HE'S GOT A BAD HEART...

THE HEART MONITOR--IT'S GONE DEAD!

DR. JEFFRIES-- COME IN HERE-- *QUICKLY!*

AND, AFTER LONG, FRANTIC MOMENTS...

KEEP TRYING THE ELECTRO-SHOCK, NURSE!

I AM, DR. JEFFRIES, BUT IT WON'T WORK! HE'S NOT RESPONDING!

THE BOY'S FATE IS IN OTHER HANDS NOW. WHAT HAST BEEN DONE CANNOT BE UNDONE. THY MISGUIDED EFFORTS, IF NOT HALTED--

--CAN ONLY RESULT IN FURTHER TRAGEDY AND GRIEF.

WE...WE DID... ALL WE COULD.

THE OCCUPIERS GASP, AND STIFFEN.

THEIR LEADER TURNS TO THE DOOR...

LISTEN TO ME! IT'S OVER!

JIMMY SAYERS IS DEAD.

WHAT--?!!

NOOO!! I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO KILL HIM! HE REACHED INTO HIS JACKET--! I THOUGHT HE HAD A GUN!!

IT WAS A MISTAKE! OH, GOD HELP ME, IT WAS A *MISTAKE*--!

HIS... HIS HEART... I KNEW IT... I KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN...

MOST OF THE CROWD IS NUMBED BY THE TWIN DISPLAY OF GRIEF...

BUT A FEW GRUMBLE DARKLY AND START TO MOVE FORWARD...

NO! DON'T YOU *DARE!* ONE KILLING IS *ENOUGH* FOR ONE DAY! ENOUGH FOR ALL THE TIME GOD'S GIVEN US!!

DON'T YOU *DARE* SPOIL MY GRIEF WITH *MORE!*

THOR WAS RIGHT. IT'S OVER NOW. IT CAN'T BE UNDONE. SO GO HOME... PLEASE... JUST **GO HOME.**

AND THE STRICKEN WOMAN'S EMOTION WIELDS A POWER NO AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE CAN EVER POSSESS...

THE CROWD DISPERSES... ON BOTH SIDES.

SHE **DID** HEAR THE THUNDER GOD'S WORDS, THEN, AND WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY ONE WHO **TRULY** HEARD.

MOTHER AND COP LOOK ACROSS THE CHASM INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES, AND SOMETHING PASSES ALONG THE BOND OF GRIEF BETWEEN THEM.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT... BUT PERHAPS IT IS GRACED WITH JUST A TOUCH OF UNDERSTANDING.

AND THOR, HIS HEART HEAVIER THAN ANY MORTAL CAN CONCEIVE, IS THE LAST TO DEPART...

...HIS HEAD LOW.

EPILOGUE:

YOU DESERTED YOUR PATIENT, BLAKE! HE **DIED.**

BUT I--

NO EXCUSES, BLAKE!

I DON'T CARE WHAT THE REASON WAS-- FEAR OF THAT MOB OR SOME PETTY PERSONAL REASON!

IT WAS AN EXTREME BREACH OF PROFESSIONALISM! YOU ARE HEREWITH SUSPENDED FROM PRACTICE AT THIS CLINIC--

--AND YOUR POSITION HERE IS BEING PLACED UNDER IMMEDIATE REVIEW, STARTING TOMORROW. THAT IS **ALL.**

I WANT YOU TO KNOW, DR. BLAKE, THAT I THINK DR. JEFFRIES IS BEING A LITTLE EXTREME. THE BOY HAD A WEAK HEART--RHEUMATIC FEVER WHEN HE WAS AN INFANT.

I WATCHED YOUR SURGERY--NO ONE COULD HAVE PERFORMED IT BETTER. SO, IF YOU HAD GOOD REASON TO LEAVE WHEN YOU DID... WELL, ONCE HIS HEART FAILED, **NO ONE** COULD HAVE SAVED HIM.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION...

IT ISN'T, NURSE, BUT THANK YOU.

THANK YOU FOR TRYING.

FROM ONE WHO HAS TRIED HIMSELF... **BOTH** HIS SELVES.

NEXT

THE JUDGMENT OF TYR!

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS™

A CALL TO ARMS!

SLOWLY, WITH MEASURED TREAD, HEAD BOWED, **BALDER THE BRAVE**, ASGARDIAN GOD OF LIGHT, ENTERS THE THRONEROOM OF **ODIN**, LORD OF THE REALM... THE LIMP FIGURE OF HIS LOVER CRADLED IN HIS ARMS.

THE ASSEMBLED NOBILITY GAPE IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT BEFORE THEM. AND THEN THE STUNNED SILENCE IS BROKEN BY A SINGLE WORD UTTERED FROM THE ROYAL LIPS IN DISBELIEF...

BALDER!

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AYE, MY LIEGE. I HAVE RETURNED FROM THE LAND OF THE *NORNS* TO WHICH I WAS ABDUCTED BY ITS EVIL QUEEN, *KARNILLA.*

KARNILLA...SHE, WHO SOUGHT, THROUGH MEANS MOST VILE, MY HAND IN WEDLOCK, FORCING MINE ACCEPTANCE OF A MARRIAGE PACT WHICH ONLY THE DEATH OF MY BE-LOVED *NANNA* COULD BREAK.*

*IN ISSUES #304-306 -- J.S.

BEFORE MINE EYES, SHE PLUNGED A DAGGER INTO HER HEART, THAT I MIGHT BE FREE OF THE WITCH, KARNILLA.

AND NOW...NANNA BE DEAD, AND NOT ALL THE TEARS I HAVE SHED WILL MAKE IT OTHERWISE. HER SOUL NOW WANDERS THE DOMAIN OF OUR DEPARTED-- *VALHALLA.*

BUT THE AGONY WOULD BE LESS O'ERWHELMING, MILORD, IF I DID KNOW NANNA'S SPIRIT DWELT IN THE VALHALLA OF LEGEND...A SUNLIT LANDSCAPE THAT BECKONS THOSE WEARY OF LIFE.

YET, THAT IS *NOT* VALHALLA TODAY, IS IT, ODIN...

"...NOW, IT IS A DISMAL LAND OF CLOYING MIST AND SHIFTING SHADOWS. AND THIS I KNOW TO BE *TRUE*, FOR I HAVE SET FOOT THERE, OF LATE, AND SEEN ITS HORROR."

THOU SPEAK TRUE, BRAVE ONE-- TO MY SHAME. FOR TOO LONG ODIN HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH MATTERS CELESTIAL...

...AND THUS ALLOWED *HELA*, DREAD GODDESS OF *DEATH*, TO ANNEX VALHALLA TO HER *OWN* DOMAIN OF *NIFFLEHEIM*--

--TRANS-FORMING IT INTO AS COLD AND BARREN A PLACE, AND 'TIS ODIN'S FAULT ALONE.

GO NOW, BALDER, AND WITH THEE, MY QUEEN, *FRIGGA*. PREPARE THEE FOR THE FUNERAL OF THY BELOVED NANNA. AND KNOW THIS--

--ALMIGHTY ODIN WILL RECLAIM VALHALLA FOR ASGARD'S HONORED DEAD. THIS DOTH HE *SWEAR!*

LET NOT A MOMENT PASS ERE I MAKE AMENDS. *HUGIN* AND *MUNIN*--TO ME, MY RAVENS. I HAVE A TASK FOR YE.

GO NOW, FAITHFUL ONES... GO AND SEEK THOSE NINE OF ASGARD'S FINEST, WHOM I HAVE NOT CALLED UPON IN AN AGE.

BRING TO ODIN-- HIS *VALKYRIES*. GO.

UNERRINGLY, THE EBONY EMISSARIES SCOUR THE REALM ETERNAL...SEEKING THOSE THEIR MASTER REQUESTS--

--GUIDED BY SENSES BEYOND MERE SIGHT.

THE BEASTS ARE TIRELESS IN THEIR FLIGHT. THE SOUND OF BEATING WINGS IS HEARD IN TAVERN AND DWELLING ALIKE--

--UNTIL ALL BUT ONE GODDESS HAS ANSWERED THE CALL...

...AND MADE THEIR WAY BEFORE THE THRONE OF THEIR KING.

NOT SINCE THE DAYS WHEN GRIM VIKINGS SAILED THE NORTHERN SEAS OF MIDGARD, HAVE I SUMMONED YE AS ONE...

...FOR YOU MUST NEEDS ACCOMPANY YOUR LIEGE ON A *VOYAGE* ONLY YE ARE CAPABLE OF MAKING.

NOW, BY THE POWER OF THE SACRED SPEAR *GUNGNIR*-- ONCE AGAIN WILL YE DON THE REGALIA OF *CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN.*

--ONCE AGAIN WILL YE BE--

--VALKYRIES!

BUT ONE TASK REMAINS. THY LEADER *BRUNNHILDA* HAS BEEN ABSENT FOR A TIME ON MIDGARD COHABITING THE BODY OF A MORTAL.

VALTRAUTA, GRIMGERTA. ATTEND ME.

"HIE YE TO EARTH ATOP THY WINGED STEEDS AND RETURN WITH HER WHO ONCE LED YE."

SOON, THE SPIRES OF ASGARD ARE LEFT BEHIND AS THE TWO FIGURES STREAK LIKE COMETS TOWARD THE SPHERE BELOW.

I HAVE CALLED YE TOGETHER FOR A MISSION MOST URGENT...ONE UNLIKE THAT WHICH YE DID PERFORM FOR ME IN AGES PAST--WHEN YE DID GATHER THE SOULS OF THOSE FALLEN IN BATTLE...

...AND BRING THEM, AT MY BIDDING, TO VALHALLA--FOR ETERNITY. NOW THOSE SPIRITS ARE IN TORMENT.

VALHALLA HAS FALLEN TO HOSTILE POWERS.

AND AS THE HEARTSICK MONARCH RECOUNTS THE TAKING OF THAT DOMAIN BY HELA, VALTRAUTA AND GRIMGERTA RETURN TO THE ROYAL CASTLE.

ALL-FATHER, WE BEG THY FORGIVENESS, FOR WE HAVE FAILED THEE.

BRUNNHILDA HATH *REFUSED* THY SUMMONS AND REMAINS ON MIDGARD. THAT BE HER PLACE NOW, SHE SAID.

SHE HATH REFUSED A ROYAL COMMAND! VERY WELL. NE'ER AGAIN SHALL SHE BE CALLED THY LEADER.

VALTRAUTA.

APPROACH THE PRESENCE.

BY MY DECREE DO THOU NOW LEAD THE CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN. SO BE IT.

AS THOU WISH, MILORD.

STILL MUST *ONE* BE FOUND TO COMPLETE THE RANKS OF NINE AND REPLACE THE BANISHED BRUNNHILDA. ARISE NOW, MY VALKYRIES, FOR THE TASK IS THINE. RETURN ON THE MORROW WITH THY CHOICE.

AS ODIN COMMANDS, SO SHALL IT BE DONE.

IN ALL OF ASGARD, SURELY THERE BE ONE WORTHY ENOW TO JOIN US.

LET THE SEARCH BEGIN!

BUT THE QUEST GOES BADLY. WHEREVER THE VALKYRIES APPEAR--ASGARDIANS RECOIL IN SEEMING FEAR.

BE OFF, MAIDEN-- AWAY! MY DAUGHTER WILL NOT JOIN THE LIKES OF THEE. BE OFF!

WHAT HAVE I SAID, OLD ONE, TO SO FRIGHTEN THEE?

BUT NONE WILL ANSWER. AND NONE WILL JOIN.

AND AS NIGHT FALLS, EIGHT CRESTFALLEN COMPANIONS MEET AT THE HOME OF THE VALKYRIE--

--HILDEGARDE...'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE. ALL I ENCOUNTERED ON MY JOURNEY WAS FEAR.

AS DID I.

AND I, YET, WHAT BE THE CAUSE?

PERHAPS-- EH?! BY THE HORN OF HEIMDALL-- *LOOK!* IN THE WATER OF THAT WELL...

... OUR REFLECTIONS!

THAT BE THE CROWN OF THE DEATH-GODDESS, HELA, BEHIND OUR HEADS. NOW IT BECOMES CLEAR WHY WE DID RECEIVE SUCH STUNNED REACTION.

SUCH A SIGN CAN MEAN BUT ONE THING.

THE BATTLE IN WHICH WE ARE TO BE LED WILL BRING ABOUT OUR DEATHS. HOW THEN MAY WE ASK ANOTHER TO JOIN US?

HO, HILDEGARDE! WHY ART THOU SO GLUM? I HAVE HEARD OF THY SEARCH FOR A LAST VALKYRIE. I WISH TO JOIN THEE.

NAY. NAY-- KRISTA.

THOU MUST NOT BECOME ONE OF US.

NOT YOU--

--MY SISTER!

NEXT: INTO DEATH'S DARK DOMAIN!

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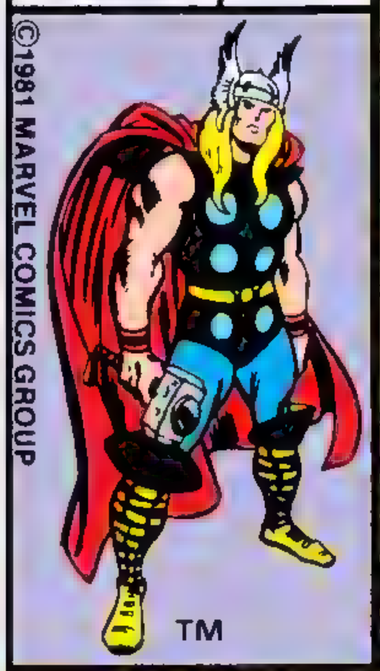

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THE MIGHTY THOR™

THE TERRIBLE THREAT OF TYR

THE GOD OF WAR!

PLUS: AN ALL-NEW TALES OF ASGARD

"BATTLE FOR VALHALLA!"

POLLARD • austin

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard.....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

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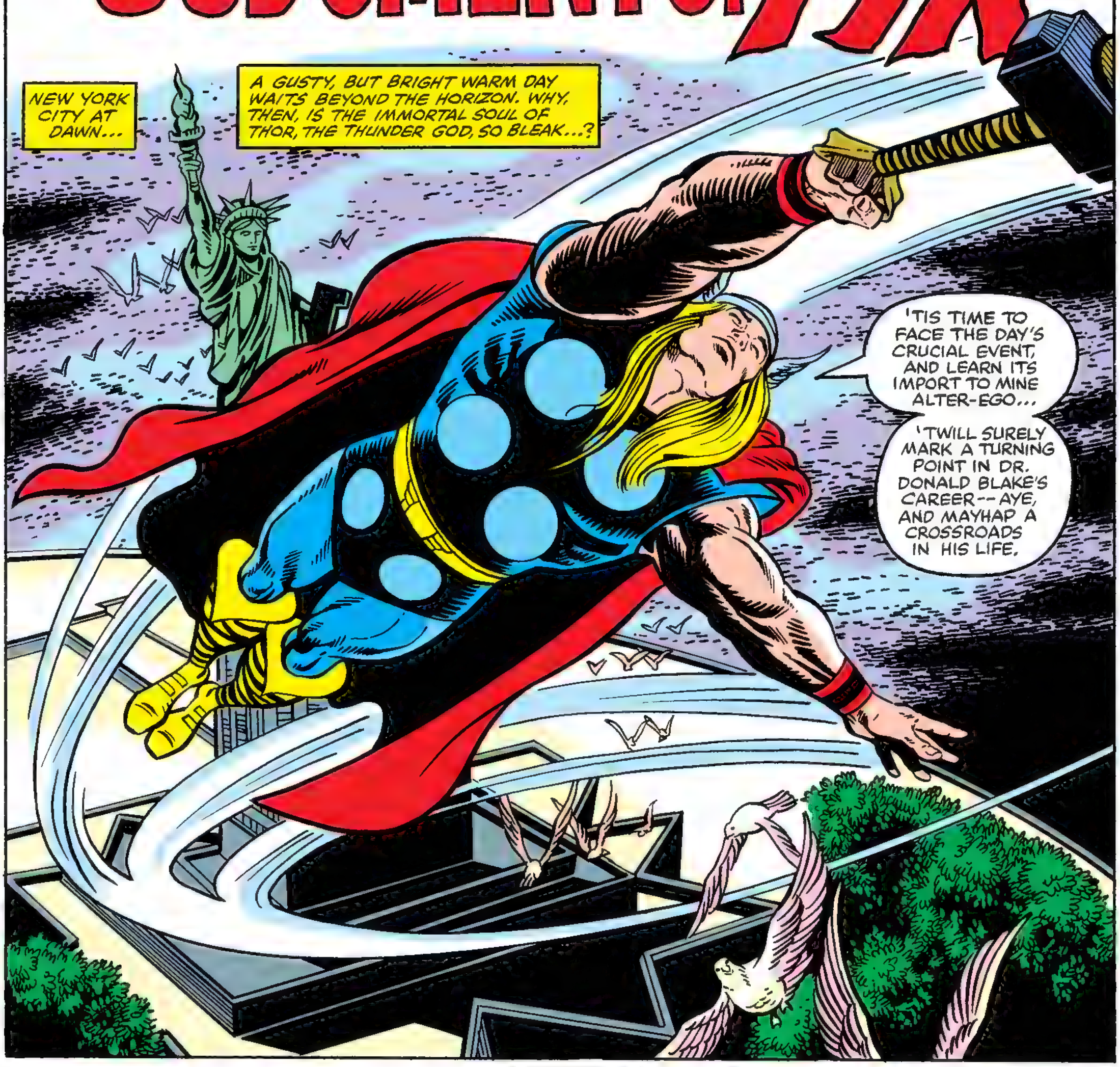
THE JUDGMENT OF THOR


NEW YORK CITY AT DAWN...
A GUSTY, BUT BRIGHT WARM DAY WAITS BEYOND THE HORIZON. WHY, THEN, IS THE IMMORTAL SOUL OF THOR, THE THUNDER GOD, SO BLEAK...?
'TIS TIME TO FACE THE DAY'S CRUCIAL EVENT, AND LEARN ITS IMPORT TO MINE ALTER-EGO...
'TWILL SURELY MARK A TURNING POINT IN DR. DONALD BLAKE'S CAREER -- AYE, AND MAYHAP A CROSSROADS IN HIS LIFE.

FOR, DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF THE CLINIC'S REVIEW, TODAY COULD WELL BE THE END OF BLAKE'S CAREER AS A PHYSICIAN...

WOULD THAT I COULD REVERSE THE DEATH OF THE YOUTH JIMMY SAYERS, THE TRAGEDY WHICH HAST BROUGHT ABOUT THIS DAY OF BLAKE'S JUDGMENT..*

...AND NOT MERELY TO AVOID THE TRIAL, BUT SIMPLY TO PRESERVE A LIFE LOST WITHOUT REASON.

*SEE LAST ISSUE. --JIM.

EVEN NOW, AS I STRIKE MINE URU HAMMER TO BECOME THE MORTAL BLAKE, I FEEL MISGIVINGS ABOUT RESUMING MY LIFE ON MIDGARD...

BOOM

BUT NO, NOW THAT I *AM* BLAKE, I KNOW I'VE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.

EARTH IS TOO MUCH IN MY BLOOD.

STILL, I CAN'T FORGET THAT I'M A GOD, AND SOMETIMES THE DAILY TOILS AND TROUBLES OF HUMANITY...

WELL, THEY START TO GET TO ME...

"...MAKING ME LONG FOR THE SHINY MAJESTY OF ASGARD...

"...AND EVEN MORE, MAKING ME LONG FOR MY LOVE... THE FAIR LADY SIF!"

HOW MANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS MUST I ENDURE? HOW MANY BLEAK DAWNS HAUNTED BY TROUBLED THOUGHTS OF DEPARTED THOR--?

I THINK I FINALLY UNDERSTAND HIS FASCINATION WITH MIDGARD...

...BUT HOW MAY I UNDERSTAND HIS DECISION TO *LEAVE* ME--?

A FAIR MORNING, LADY SIF... FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP.

EH--? *TYR!!*

AYE, MILADY...I HAVE COME TO CALL ON THEE BECAUSE I SENSE THAT WE ART BOTH LONELY...

I APPRECIATE THY CONCERN, TYR, BUT IT DOES NOT GIVE THEE THE RIGHT TO ENTER MINE PALACE WITHOUT BIDDING.

WERE I TO AWAIT THY BIDDING, LADY SIF--

--I MIGHT WELL WAIT FOREVER.

AND SO, I HAVE COME TO FILL THY DAY WITH THOUGHTS OF SOMETHING OTHER THAN LOSS, AND TO CONVINCE THEE THAT WHAT THOU HAST LOST IS MAYHAP NOT WORTHY OF BEING FOUND.

'TIS NOT THY PLACE TO JUDGE WHAT I HAVE LOST.

PERHAPS NOT... YET MIGHT I NOT HELP THEE *REPLACE* THAT LOSS?

THE LOSS OF *LOVE* CAN HARDLY BE REPLACED BY THE GOD OF *WAR.*

YOU THINK THE GOD OF WAR HAS NO ROOM IN HIS HEART FOR LOVE? WAS IT NOT LOVE WHICH LED ME TO ASSUME MINE POSITION-- LOVE OF ASGARD, AND A STRONG DESIRE TO DEFEND THE REALM FROM DESTRUCTION?

WHAT ELSE BUT LOVE OF THE REALM AND ITS CITIZENS COULD HAVE GRANTED ME THE STRENGTH TO SACRIFICE MY VERY HAND TO THE FENRIS WOLF--?

HEAR ME, LADY SIF, FOR I CAN REMAIN SILENT NO LONGER! MY LOVE FOR THEE IS TOO GREAT, TOO VAST, TO REMAIN UNSPOKEN AND UN--

BE SILENT, TYR! UNHAND ME!!

HOW DARE YOU PLEDGE THY LOVE TO ME--WHEN MINE OWN LOVE IS SWORN TO THOR AND THOR ALONE?!

BUT MILADY-- THOU MUST HEED ME--HEAR WHAT I SAY--!

THY LOVE IS GRIEVOUSLY MISPLACED! IT BELONGS TO ME AND--

SILENCE! GET OUT, TYR!

GET OUT, VILLAIN! NOW!

SO BE IT, LADY SIF, BUT THOU WILT REGRET THIS MORN'S ACTIONS IN TIMES TO COME...

...TIMES SOON TO COME!

AYE, HER LOVE MAY BE PLEDGED TO THOR, BUT THAT LOVE CAN EXIST ONLY SO LONG AS THOR LIVES TO CLAIM IT...

AND IF IT BE THE LAST ACT OF MINE OWN LIFE, I--TYR, THE GOD OF WAR--SHALL SEE THAT THE THUNDER GOD LIVES TO CLAIM NOTHING!

MEANWHILE, IN A TENEMENT KITCHEN ON EARTH...

BETTER SKIP THE REST OF MY COFFEE OR I'LL BE LATE.

IT WAS MY SO-CALLED "ABSENCE FROM DUTY" WHICH CAUSED THIS PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE...

...SO I'D BETTER MAKE CERTAIN I'M PRESENT FOR THE REVIEW OF MY ACTIONS.

MORNING, SAM.

MORNING, DR. BLAKE--NICE DAY OUT IF YOU DON'T BREATHE TOO HARD.

BUT HOW SHOULD I REACT TO THIS REVIEW--TO THIS TRIAL? I'VE NEVER BEEN JUDGED BY MY PEERS BEFORE--

--CERTAINLY NOT BY THOSE WHO DON'T AND CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE FULL REASONS FOR MY CONDUCT. WELL...I'LL SOON FIND OUT, I GUESS, AND JUST HOPE FOR THE BEST.

TYR'S PALACE IN THE HEART OF ASGARD...

HOW LONG HAVE I SECRETLY LOVED THE LADY SIF--ONLY TO HAVE MY FIRST APPROACH SO CRUELLY REBUFFED--?

NOW THAT THOR HAS DESERTED SIF FOR MIDGARD, IT SEEMED THE PERFECT TIME TO REVEAL MY AFFECTIONS...

...BUT EVEN THOR'S ABSENCE HAST DONE NOTHING TO WEAKEN HER MISGUIDED LOVE! 'TIS *HE* WHO IS TO BLAME!

AYE, AND LONG HAS HIS VERY EXISTENCE BEEN A THORN IN MY SIDE!

THOR'S PROWESS AS A WARRIOR AND PRIME DEFENDER OF ASGARD HAS LONG SINCE ECLIPSED MINE OWN STATION AS GOD OF WAR-- BUT NOW I'LL STAND FOR IT NO LONGER! WE SHALL CONTEST THE MATTER ONCE AND FOR ALL--

--AND MAY THE STRONGER GOD PREVAIL!

THIS SHIELD WILL SUFFICE FOR DEFENSE, BUT I NEED MORE--MUCH MORE--TO COUNTER THE MIGHT OF THOR'S MYSTIC URU HAMMER...

AND I KNOW WHERE TO FIND IT--BUT FIRST I NEED A RUSE TO GAIN ME TRANSPORT TO THE BATTLEGROUND OF MIDGARD...

...AND, TOO, I KNOW WHERE TO FIND THAT RUSE ...HIDDEN AMONGST THE DUST OF THE GRAND VIZIER'S LIBRARY.

WELL, THERE'S THE CLINIC.

RICK

BETTER BRACE MYSELF FOR THE ORDEAL AND--

HELP! LOOK OUT!!

EH--? ON THAT ROOF--!

THAT CRANE--IT'S NOT PROPERLY BRACED--THE WEIGHT OF THE GIRDER COULD CAUSE IT TO TOPPLE!

THE THING'S GONNA FALL!

YEAH-- AND LOOK AT ALL THE TRAFFIC ON THE STREET UNDERNEATH IT!

NOT TO MENTION THE OPERATOR OF THE CRANE HIMSELF!

GOT TO REACH THE SECLUSION OF THE ALLEY--

--RAP MY WALKING STICK AND CHANGE TO--

BOOOM

THOR, THE IMMORTAL LORD OF STORMS!

HE APPEARS FROM THE HEART OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING...

...EVEN AS RAW METAL SHRIEKS AND SNAPS, SENDING THE CRANE INTO A DISASTROUS PLUMMET...

THERE BE DANGER FROM TWO SOURCES HERE...

FIRST I MUST NEEDS DEAL WITH YON MASSIVE GIRDER--

FUH-WHANGG

--AND HOPE THAT THE MIGHT OF MYSTIC MJOLNIR WILL SUFFICE TO REMOVE ITS THREAT!

AND, AS A SPLASH IN THE EAST RIVER MORE THAN A MILE CROSSTOWN ATTESTS, THE URU HAMMER'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT.

NOW FOR THE HUGE MACHINE ITSELF...

HE CATCHES THE CRANE ON HIS BROAD SHOULDERS, SLOWLY AND GRADUALLY BREAKING ITS FALL...

...BEFORE ONCE AGAIN SOARING SKYWARD WITH HIS MULTI-TON BURDEN.

THEN, WITH A SURPRISING GENTLENESS FOR ONE OF SUCH AWESOME STRENGTH--

--HE SETS THE CRANE SAFELY DOWN ON THE CENTER OF THE ROOF.

WOW! DID YOU *SEE* THAT--?!

WHAT A MAN! HE'S *UNREAL*--!

BUT THERE IS HARDLY TIME (NOR THE INCLINATION) TO BASK IN THE CROWD'S ADULATION...

AND NOW, ERE I FURTHER JEOPARDIZE THE STANDING OF MINE MORTAL FORM--'TIS TIME TO COMPLETE DONALD BLAKE'S APPOINTMENT.

BUT IN THE GRAND VIZIER'S LIBRARY...

AYE, TYR, THERE *IS* SUCH A LAW, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN INVOKED IN AGES AND--

I CARE NOT FOR THE LAW'S HISTORY, VIZIER, BUT FOR ITS SOURCE. WHERE IS IT SET DOWN?

HERE, IN THE BOOK OF CONDUCT... BUT--

BRING IT. WE GO NOW TO BESEECH ALL-FATHER ODIN.

SORRY I'M LATE, BUT--

INDEED, DR. BLAKE, WE WERE BEGINNING TO FEAR YOU WOULD NOT SHOW UP AT ALL...

IN FACT, WE PONDERED THE NECESSITY OF ISSUING A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST.

I HOPE THAT'S JUST A JOKE, DR. JEFFRIES. AFTER ALL, I'M ONLY A FEW MINUTES LATE...

THE LOSS OF A PATIENT'S LIFE, DR. BLAKE, IS HARDLY A JOKING MATTER.

AS YOU WELL KNOW, THAT LOSS CAN OCCUR IN A MATTER OF SECONDS, NOT MINUTES.

YES, DR. BLAKE, WE'VE JUST BEEN REVIEWING THE CHARGE AGAINST YOU.

FRANKLY, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT YOU ACTUALLY ABANDONED A SERIOUSLY WOUNDED PATIENT ON THE OPERATING TABLE.

I DID *NOT* ABANDON THE PATIENT. I LEFT THE O.R. ONLY *AFTER* SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF SURGERY.

AND ONLY FOR GOOD REASON, BUT HOW CAN I TELL THEM THAT--?

I'VE DONE ALL I CAN, NURSE--I'LL BE BACK IN A FEW MINUTES.

BUT DOCTOR--

HOW CAN I TELL THEM THAT THE EVENTS *OUTSIDE* THE CLINIC *FORCED* ME TO LEAVE--

--WITHOUT REVEALING THAT I'M *THOR*--?

BUT THE SURGERY WAS HARDLY SUCCESSFUL, WAS IT, IF THE PATIENT DIED?

HE HAD A WEAK HEART.

IT WAS AN EMERGENCY CASE--THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD'VE KNOWN.

BUT IF YOU HADN'T LEFT SO HASTILY--

THE ATTENDING NURSE HAS STATED THERE WAS NOTHING *ANYONE* COULD HAVE DONE!

NEVERTHELESS, IF YOU'D STAYED WITH THE PATIENT AND *TRIED*--

IF! IF! *IF!* AND IF I WERE GOD, THERE WOULDN'T *BE* ANY PATIENTS!

BE THAT AS IT MAY, DR. BLAKE... SINCE THE ATTENDING NURSE IS UNAVAILABLE TO GIVE HER FORMAL STATEMENT, WE ARE FORCED TO SUSPEND THIS REVIEW RULING FOR THE TIME BEING.

IN THE MEANTIME, NEEDLESS TO SAY, YOU ARE ALSO SUSPENDED FROM ANY FURTHER PRACTICE IN THIS CLINIC.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, DR. JEFFRIES. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I THINK I'LL GO FEED THE PIGEONS.

TYR HAST REQUESTED THIS AUDIENCE, ALL-FATHER ODIN, IN REGARDS TO A CERTAIN ANCIENT ASGARDIAN LAW...

AND WHAT IS THE LAW, VIZIER?

WELL, IT... IT STATES THAT NO GOD MAY DEPART THE REALM ETERNAL WITHOUT FIRST PRESENTING A PETITION TO DO SO, EXPLAINING HIS REASONS, AND GAINING MAJORITY APPROVAL FROM THE OTHER GODS.

THOR--? THOU ART SPEAKING OF MINE *SON*--?

AYE, GREAT ODIN... UNLESS THOU CHOOSEST TO EXEMPT THY FAVORITE SON FROM THE LAW GOVERNING ALL OTHER CITIZENS OF THE REALM...

HAVE A CARE WITH THY VEILED ACCUSATIONS, TYR. VERY WELL, LET NONE SAY THAT THE SON OF ODIN DISOBEYS *ANY* LAW. I SHALL SUMMON HIM BACK FOR THIS PETTY TRIAL BY VOTE--

EXCUSE ME, ALL-FATHER, BUT THE LAW FURTHER STATES THAT ANY OFFENDING GOD SHALL BE ESCORTED BACK TO ASGARD BY THE GOD OF WAR OR HIS CHARGES.

A NUISANCE, THESE LAWS, BUT BEGONE!

THOU HAST MY PERMISSION TO ESCORT THOR BACK TO THE REALM.

AT ONCE, ALL-FATHER...

OR VERY SOON, AT LEAST...

AND OUTSIDE ODIN'S PALACE, TYR GRIMLY STRIDES THE EXALTED AVENUE OF HEROES...

...STOPPING ONLY AT ITS VERY END, BEFORE COMMEMORATING PAST GLORY.

...AS SOON AS I GAIN A WEAPON EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGE OF MYSTIC MJOLNIR...

BLASHH

...THE ALL-POWERFUL MACE OF THE MYTH-WARS!

JUST AS ODIN HIMSELF ONCE USED THIS VERY MACE TO PRESERVE THE DEFENSE OF ASGARD--

--SO, TOO, SHALL I EMPLOY ITS MIGHT TO JOURNEY TO MIDGARD AND DEFEAT THOR!

INDEED, WEAVING A PATTERN OF SORCERY AROUND HIS BODY, MUCH AS THOR EMPLOYS HIS HAMMER MJOLNIR--

--TYR NOW STREAKS BEYOND BIFROST, THE RAINBOW BRIDGE SPANNING SPACE AND TIME, TO THE WORLD CALLED MIDGARD...

...OTHERWISE KNOWN AS **EARTH**, WHERE A GLUM DONALD BLAKE PACES THROUGH RIVERSIDE PARK, SCARCELY AWARE OF THE SUMMER THRONGS AROUND HIM...

FACE IT-- I HANDLED THE REVIEW POORLY, LOST MY TEMPER, COULDN'T HANDLE BEING JUDGED BY THOSE WHO AREN'T IN A POSITION TO FAIRLY DO SO...

BUT THEN, ENTERING A COPSE, BLAKE IS CONFRONTED BY AN ABRUPT FLASH OF LIGHT AND--

WHAT THE--? TYR--THE ASGARDIAN GOD OF WAR! BUT WHAT'S HE DOING HERE ON EARTH?!

I HAVE BEEN SENT TO ESCORT THEE BACK TO ASGARD, BUT SINCE THOU REFUSETH TO COME, 'TIS MY DUTY TO *DESTROY* THEE!

REFUSE TO COME? BUT I HAVEN'T SAID A WORD!

NOR IS THE DECEIT OF THY TONGUE NEEDED!

STAND THEE FAST AND PREPARE TO FALL!

NO! GOT TO CHANGE TO THOR FAST--

KRAK

--BEFORE THAT MACE STRIKES ME!

THE CHANGE IS IN TIME-- JUST BARELY!

WUMP

A SPLIT SECOND LONGER AND DONALD BLAKE WOULD HAVE BEEN UTTERLY DESTROYED.

AS IT IS, EVEN THOR IS STUNNED BY THE POWER OF THE MACE--

--SLAMMED BACK INTO A GROUP OF TEN-MILERS WHO HAVE YET TO FINISH THREE-- AND WHO WILL HARDLY HAVE THE BREATH TO GO ON.

I KNOW NOT WHAT THY PURPOSE BE, TYR...

...NOR WHAT MADNESS HAS POSSESSED THEE...

...BUT IF 'TIS A FIGHT YOU SEEK--

--THEN THOR SHALL GLADLY GRANT THEE SAME!

SOMEHOW, THE RUNNERS REACH DEEP INSIDE AND FIND ENOUGH FOR A FINAL FRANTIC SPRINT...

AND IT'S JUST AS WELL THAT THEY DO--

--FOR THE TWO ASGARDIAN WARRIORS CLASH WITH A SHOCK OF THUNDER--

--THEIR WEAPONS IMPACTING WITH A FORCE GREAT ENOUGH TO TOPPLE MOUNTAINS.

THE ENTIRE PARK EMPTIES WITHIN MOMENTS.

SOMEBODY CALL THE COPS!

ARE YOU KIDDING? EVEN THE *ARMY* COULDN'T STOP THOSE TWO!

THOU HAST BEEN JUDGED UNFIT FOR THE RANKS OF ASGARDIAN GODHOOD, THOR--

--AND THUS THY VERY EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THE GLORY OF THE REALM ETERNAL!

THOU ART A BASE LIAR, TYR!

NEVER HAVE I SHIRKED MY DUTY TO ASGARD-- NOR TO MIDGARD--AND IF I HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG, THEN I'LL BE JUDGED BY NO ONE SHORT OF ODIN HIMSELF!

FRAK!

SPA-KOOM

DO YOU HEAR, VILLAIN?!

LEAST OF ALL WILL I BE JUDGED BY A GOD OF WAR GONE BERSERK!

THOU MAYEST BE RIGHT, THUNDER GOD-- FOR THY URU HAMMER MJOLNIR IS MOST POWERFUL INDEED...

SPRAKT

...BUT KNOW THAT THE MACE OF THE MYTH-WARS IS NO TRIFLING TOY!

THE SACRED *MACE*--?!

AYE--AND WHETHER I CONQUER OR FALL, I SHALL WIELD IT TO THE *DEATH!*

THROKK

THY MADNESS IS EVEN GREATER THAN I HAD CONCEIVED!

SPOOM

THOU HAST DESCENDED TO THE LOWLY STATUS OF COMMON THIEF-- DARING TO STEAL ODIN'S OWN HALLOWED WEAPON!

KNOW, THEN, THAT MY POWER TRANSCENDS THAT OF MJOLNIR...

I COMMAND, TOO, THE POWER AND FURY OF THE VERY ELEMENTS--

--AND I SUMMON THIS STORM, TYR--

--TO PUNISH THEE FOR THY FOLLY--

FROOM

--AND TO ENSURE THAT ODIN'S SACRED MACE IS NEVER AGAIN SOILED BY THY TOUCH!

AND NOW, MAD GOD OF WAR...'TIS OVER.

WHAT?!

YOU THINK ME FINISHED, THUNDER GOD--?

YOU THINK ME READY TO SURRENDER DUE TO THE MERE LOSS OF A WEAPON--?!

NOT HARDLY, CRAVEN THOR--

--FOR THE GOD OF WAR COMMANDS *MANY* WEAPONS!

TOO LONG HAVE I BEEN OVERSHADOWED BY THY EXAGGERATED PROWESS!

'TIS ONLY THY FLASH AND EMPTY STYLE WHICH ATTRACTS ATTENTION TO THEE!

WITHOUT IT, THOU ART NOTHING!

HAVE A CARE, TYR!

YOU SPEAK TO THOR--

--AND YOU AFFRONT THE ROYAL SON OF ODIN!

SPRAKT

AYE, YET ANOTHER FALSE STRENGTH YOU COMMAND--THY FAVORED STATUS!

KLUDD

WITHOUT IT--AND WITHOUT THY HAMMER--THOU ART NAUGHT BUT AN EMPTY BRAGGART!

YOU SEE?!

EVEN WITH THY HAMMER, THOU ART NO MATCH FOR THE GOD OF WAR!

I SEE NOTHING, TYR, NOTHING BUT A GOD WHO ATTRIBUTES HIS OWN WEAKNESSES TO HIS FOE! MY HAMMER IS SHEATHED... AND ODIN IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN...

NOW COME--COME AND FACE THE POWER OF MINE NAKED HAND!

COME AND FACE THE FURY OF THOR!!

SPLOWW

BRATCH

KRUMPP

NOW, TYR, WE SHALL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THY BASE TREACHERY...

YOU SAID YOU HAD BEEN SENT TO "ESCORT ME BACK TO ASGARD"-- FOR SOME UNNAMED PURPOSE...

WELL, BY ODIN'S BLOOD, WE *SHALL* JOURNEY TO THE REALM ETERNAL-- BUT *I* SHALL ESCORT *THEE*...

...AND THE PURPOSE OF THY MADNESS SHALL BE MADE *CLEAR*-- LEST ASGARD ITSELF PAY THE PRICE OF MY *RAGE!*

NEXT ISSUE • THE TWO TRIALS OF A THUNDER GOD! **SERPENT FROM THE HEAVENS!**

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS™

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JUST BEYOND THE SPIRES OF **ASGARD**, HOME OF THE NORSE GODS, ALMIGHTY **ODIN**, ITS DIVINE RULER, CAREFULLY SURVEYS AN ASSEMBLAGE OF NINE SPECIALLY CHOSEN GODDESSES...SOON TO UNDERGO A MOST UNEXPECTED--

BAPTISM OF FIRE!

I BE MOST PLEASED WITH WHAT I BEHOLD. EACH OF YE SEEMS FIT ENOW FOR THE TASK AT HAND--

--E'EN YOUNG **KRISTA**, SISTER OF HILDEGARDE, WHO HAS MOST RECENTLY JOINED OUR RANKS.*

*OVER HER SISTER'S PROTESTS, BETWEEN LAST ISSUE AND THIS. -- J.S.

I HAVE CALLED YE TOGETHER TO UNDERTAKE A MISSION MOST PERILOUS--TO RECLAIM LOST *VALHALLA*. ONCE, A BRIGHT AND FAVORED REALM--

--WHERE THOSE WHO PERISHED IN BATTLE WERE TAKEN TO SPEND ETERNITY AS I WILLED, IN THE JOYOUS PURSUIT OF ARMED CONFLICT.

AND TO CARRY OUT MINE IMPERIAL DECREE, I DID, IN THE DISTANT PAST, APPOINT YE NINE TO ACCOMPANY THOSE DEEMED WORTHY TO VALHALLA.

YE, I DID DUB--*CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN*...

...MY *VALKYRIES*.

BUT, WITHIN RECENT MEMORY, MY MIND HATH BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH MATTERS CELESTIAL, AND THUS, I HAVE NEGLECTED MY BELOVED VALHALLA.

AND *HELA*, EVER-AMBITIOUS *GODDESS OF DEATH*, HATH MOVED SWIFTLY TO *ANNEX* IT TO HER OWN DOMAIN--

--*NIFFLEHEIM*...DREAD LAND OF SHADOWS WHEREIN DWELL THE UNDECORATED DEAD WHO LOATHE ALL ELSE.

AND NOW, WE RIDE MY CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN...WE RIDE TO RECOVER FOR THE GOLDEN REALM THAT WHICH IS RIGHTFULLY OURS--

--VALHALLA.

ONWARD TO NIFFLEHEIM! THERE TO SLAY THE GODDESS OF DEATH HERSELF IF NEED BE! IN THE SERVICE OF THOSE SOULS WE ONCE DID CLAIM--

--FOR ODIN! FOR ASGARD! FOR VALHALLA!

LIKE A SWARM OF AVENGING ANGELS, THEY FLY TOWARD AN UNKNOWN FATE...THEIR LIEGE FOLLOWING SWIFTLY--

*--ASTRIDE THE ROYAL STALLION, EIGHT-HOOVED **SLEIPNIR.***

AT LENGTH, THEY REACH THE GLEAMING BRIDGE WHICH SPANS THE GREAT CHASM 'TWEEN SENTIENT AND DECEASED.

AHEAD, SISTERS! PAST THIS WALL OF COLD MIST OUR JOURNEY ENDS.

OH! WHAT BASE TRICKERY BE THIS?! WHERE ONCE WAS MIST--NOW A WALL OF SEARING *FLAME* HATH ERUPTED!

LOOK! THAT BE NOT ALL WHICH DOTH BAR OUR PATH. FROM THE VERY WALL ITSELF--

--BEINGS OF FIRE, BRANDISHING FLAMING SWORDS! DEMONS OF HELA!

ATTACK, VALKYRIES! DRIVE THEM BACK INTO THE FOUL PITS FROM WHICH THEY HATH EMERGED! BACK!

BUT THE BATTLE GOES BADLY FOR THE VALIANT WARRIORS.

FOR, NOT BEING CREATURES TRULY ALIVE--THE FIENDS MAY **NOT** BE TRULY SLAIN, HOWEVER POTENT THE SWORD THRUST.

THEIR NUMBERS SEEM ENDLESS, VALTRAUTA.

SOON, OUR STRENGTH WILL BE DEPLETED, AND THEN--

NAY, SISTERS! DARK HELA MAY NOT GLOAT IN VICTORY YET. THE SOLUTION TO OUR DILEMMA BE BELOW--

--BELOW, IN THE DEEP AND COOLING WATERS WE HAVE TRAVERSED SO OFTEN IN AGES PAST.

VALTRAUTA COMMANDS YE! TURN FROM YOUR FOES AND FOLLOW ME THOUGH YOUR HEARTS BE TRULY IN THE STRUGGLE.

DESCEND, SISTERS... DRENCH THYSELVES IN THE ENCHANTED WATERS BELOW UNTIL THE LIQUID BE ALMOST A PART OF YE.

NOW ARISE--AND WRAP THY SOAKED CLOAKS ABOUT YE FOR PROTECTION... AND HURL THYSELVES AT THE WAITING WALL OF FIRE--

--THAT YE MAY PASS THROUGH UNHARMED!

ONWARD, SISTERS! WE HAVE BREACHED THE FLAMING BARRIER THAT DID SEPARATE US FROM OUR GOAL... AND NOT A HAIR 'PON THY HEADS BE SINGED.

HALT NOW-- AND LET US COME TO TERMS WITH THIS BLEAK TERRAIN.

AHEAD, I DO SEE THE HAZY OUTLINE OF THAT WHICH WAS ONCE-FAMILIAR AND NOT FOREBODING AS 'TIS NOW...

...THE MIST-SHROUDED WALLS OF VALHALLA ITSELF.

'TIS THERE WE MUST FLY... THERE TO LIBERATE THIS CHOSEN LAND OF LORD ODIN FROM THE VILE CLUTCHES OF HELA.

--OR DIE TRYING.

NEXT: LAST RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES!

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TM

THE MIGHTY

THOR

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THOR STANDS TRIAL IN ASGARD--

--WHILE A MONSTER WALKS THE EARTH!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

SERPENT FROM THE HEAVENS

IN ALL THE WORLDS REAL OR IMAGINED, THERE IS NO PLACE OF GREATER SPLENDOR OR MAJESTY THAN THE THRONE ROOM OF ODIN, ALL-FATHER OF SHINING ASGARD. IT IS HERE THAT OUR TALE BEGINS...
STAND THEE ASIDE, HERALDS! I BRING THE WAR-GOD TYR-- HE WHO DID COME DOWN TO MIDGARD TO ATTACK ME WITHOUT WARNING AND WITHOUT CAUSE.
I WOULD LEARN THE MEANING OF HIS TREACHERY AT ONCE!

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KNOW THEE, THOR, WHERE THOU *ART*? EXPLAIN THY ACTIONS!

TYR CLAIMED HE WAS ENLISTED FOR HIS FOUL MISSION BY ODIN HIMSELF! *CAN IT BE TRUE, MY FATHER? DIDST THOU SO DESPATCH HIM?

NAY--NEVER WOULD I DELIBERATELY VISIT INJURY UPON MY SONS, NOT EVEN UPON THY TREACHEROUS BROTHER LOKI. TYR HAS MUCH TO ACCOUNT FOR...

*LAST ISSUE, --JIM.

'TIS A LIE, ODIN! I MERELY SOUGHT TO PERFORM MY CHARGE, TO OBEY THE DICTATES OF THE LAW-- WHEN THOR RESISTED TO THE POINT OF BATTLE!

WHAT LAW?

THE LAW IN THE BOOK OF CONDUCT, THOR, WHICH STATES THAT NO GOD MAY DEPART ASGARD WITHOUT A MAJORITY CONSENT OF THE OTHER GODS.

AYE--AND WHEN I SOUGHT TO FETCH THOR BACK TO AN APPROPRIATE TRIBUNAL, HE REFUSED TO COME AND STRUCK AT ME!

BASE LIAR! I KNEW OF NO SUCH LAW, NOR DID TYR EXPLAIN IT TO ME! HE STRUCK AT *ME*, OUT OF JEALOUSY AND SOME OTHER, UNKNOWN MOTIVE...

NAY! 'TIS HIS WORD 'GAINST MINE!

ENOUGH!

IT SEEMS THAT EVEN THE GODS OFT-TIMES ACT LIKE CHILDREN...

WELL, VIZIER? WHAT DOES THY BOOK SUGGEST WE DO NEXT?

I...WELL, I ASSUME WE SHOULD CARRY IT OUT TO ITS END, ODIN.

VERY WELL, THERE SHALL BE A CONVOCATION OF THE MAJOR GODS IN THE GREAT HALL, MY SON, AND THERE THOU SHALT SUBMIT FOR A VOTE THY APPEAL TO RESIDE ON MIDGARD.

THAT IS ALL.

AND SO I HAVE LEFT EARTH, AND THE TRIAL OF MINE MORTAL FORM DR. DONALD BLAKE, ONLY TO FACE A SIMILAR TRIAL HERE ON ASGARD... AND IF I SHOULD LOSE THIS TRIAL... BLAKE COULD WELL CEASE TO EXIST.

OUR DIFFERENCE SHALL BE SETTLED THEN, THUNDER GOD...

...IN THE GREAT HALL.

AND, IN ANOTHER PLACE ELSEWHERE IN ASGARD...

LOKI, MY HUSBAND, I HAVE NEWS...

SIGYN AGAIN! CURSE MY MARRIAGE TO HER--SHE'S LIKE A WEIGHT ROUND MY NECK! WILL I *NEVER* BE FREE OF HER SIMPERING INFLUENCE?

I KNOW, LOKI, THAT YOU ARE NOT ALWAYS COMFORTABLE WITH ME, BUT I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO CHANGE THAT. AND KNOWING HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR BROTHER THOR, I THOUGHT THE NEWS--

WHAT NEWS?

THOR IS TO STAND TRIAL...

DEPENDENT ON THE VOTE, HE COULD REMAIN IN ASGARD PERMANENTLY.

WHAT?!--JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS RID OF HIM FOR GOOD?!

YES, BUT I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE STEPS YOU COULD TAKE, PERHAPS INFLUENCE THE VOTE SOMEHOW, TO ENSURE THAT THOR DOES *NOT* REMAIN HERE.

IF YOU NEED MORE TIME, I COULD EVEN GO TO THE GREAT HALL ALONE AND VOTE IN THY PLACE...

AYE...THERE MAY INDEED BE A WAY TO SEND THOR BACK TO MIDGARD...

AH...THANK YOU, WIFE SIGYN. YOU HAVE MY...AH...GRATITUDE.

AND, DEAR LOKI? *AND...?*

AND... MY... MY... LOVE.

OH, LOKI--THOU HAST KINDLED MY HEART WITH THE BRIGHTEST JOY I HAVE EVER KNOWN!

YOU SEE, MY HUSBAND? IF WE BOTH CHANGE OUR WAYS SLIGHTLY, EACH TO ACCOMMODATE THE OTHER, I *KNEW* WE COULD BE HAPPY TOGETHER!

DISGUSTING.

THUS DOES THE GOD OF MISCHIEF TAKE LEAVE OF HIS LOVING WIFE--

--VENTURING TO A SYSTEM OF FOREBODING CAVERNS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ASGARDIAN CITY...

MAURGLON! ART THOU STILL IMPRISONED IN STONE?

I AM, FOUL LOKI--AS WELL YOU KNOW! HAVE YOU COME TO TORMENT ME FURTHER, OR SIMPLY TO REINFORCE THE SPELL BINDING ME?

I HAVE COME TO SET THEE FREE, TROLL, PROVIDED WE CAN COME TO TERMS...

...AND THEY ARE TERMS, I AM SURE, YOU WILL EMBRACE WITH GLEE.

HOW SO?

IN RETURN FOR YOUR FREEDOM, YOU MUST AGREE TO WREAK HAVOC ON MIDGARD UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THY ACTIONS ATTRACT THOR, AND THEN...

AND THEN I TAKE *VENGEANCE* ON THOR! THOR--THE BANE OF MY VERY EXISTENCE...

"WELL I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON HIM--AND BEHELD ONLY A FAIR-HAIRED YOUTH WHO WOULD MAKE EASY PREY...

"AND FOR A TIME IT SEEMED MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF YOUNG THOR WAS WHOLLY ACCURATE...

"...FOR I EASILY BEAT HIM TO THE GROUND--

"--AND MADE READY FOR THE KILL...

"BUT THEN, LIKE A FURY POSSESSED, HE BEGAN TO STRIKE BACK--AGAIN AND YET AGAIN!

"IT WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME, IT SEEMED, THAT HE HAD ENCOUNTERED A TROLL...

"HE KNEW MY WEAKNESSES WELL, AND HAMMERED AT THEM ALL.

"WHEN IT WAS OVER, HE DID NOT EVEN CONSIDER ME ENOUGH OF A THREAT TO FINISH ME OFF.

"IT WAS NOT UNTIL YOU CAME UPON ME IN MY WEAKENED CONDITION, LOKI, THAT I LEARNED WHOM MY OPPONENT HAD BEEN--A SON OF ODIN HIMSELF.

"BUT I SOON LEARNED THAT YOU WERE HIS EVIL BROTHER, ALSO POSSESSED OF AWESOME POWERS...

"SORCEROUS POWERS.

"YOU BOUND ME HELPLESS WITH A SPELL--ME, MAURGLON THE FIERCE CAVERN TROLL!--AND LED ME OFF AS IF I WERE SOME TAMED PET--"

--TO MY OWN CAVERN, CURSE YOU, WHERE YOU'VE KEPT ME IMPRISONED EVER SINCE!

AYE, BUT ONLY UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I HAVE NEED FOR YOU--AND THAT TIME IS NOW.

BUT SEEING AS HOW IT WAS THOR WHO LEFT YOU WEAKENED AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO MY SPELL, YOU SHOULD DESPISE HIM ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DO...

...AND ALMOST AS MUCH AS YOU DESPISE ME. DO YOU AGREE TO THE PACT, MAURGLON?

I AGREE, FOUL LOKI.

THEN THOU ART FREE OF MY SPELL, CAVERN TROLL!

BY THE POWER OF MY SORCERY, HIE THEE HENCE TO THE PETTY WORLD OF MY BROTHER'S CHOOSING, AND WORK THY MISCHIEF THERE...

"...ON MIDGARD!"

WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?!

IT'S A *MONSTER!!*

WHAM

SAY, IF THIS IS SOME KINDA PUBLICITY STUNT--

IT AIN'T NO STUNT, MAN! THE STRENGTH OF THIS THING IS UNREAL! CALL THE COPS! GET SOME HELP!!

MY CAR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MY CAR?!

ONE WAY

YARK YARF

RUN, MORTALS! RUN FROM THE WRATH OF THE TROLL *MAURGLON!*

RUN AND HIDE IN YOUR FILTHY BURROWS OF YOUR FILTHY CITY!

SKRASH

MEANWHILE, IN THE GREAT HALL OF ASGARD...

THE GODS ARE CONVENED! LET THE TRIBUNAL BEGIN!

THOUGH HIS WIFE SIGYN IS PRESENT, MY BROTHER LOKI IS NOT-- NOR IS MY LOVE, THE LADY SIF...THE ONLY ONE I HAD TRULY HOPED TO SEE...

AS THOU KNOWEST, THOR SEEKS PERMISSION TO RESIDE ON MIDGARD FOR AN UNSPECIFIED TIME. THE FIRST VOTE, TYR?

THE SCION OF ODIN AND ROYAL HEIR OF ASGARD BELONGS *IN* ASGARD. I VOTE NAY.

I VOTE AYE.

THOR HAS SERVED ASGARD WELL AND DESERVES WHATEVER HE DESIRES. BESIDES MY HUSBAND LOKI IS *ALSO* SCION OF ODIN AND FULLY EQUAL TO THOR IN EVERY WAY.

NAY--MORTALS BELONG ON MIDGARD, GODS ON ASGARD.

YET OUR INFLUENCE ON MIDGARD HAS GREATLY DECREASED--MAYHAP THOR CAN CHANGE THIS.

AYE.

NAY.

AYE.

AND SO GOES THE VOTING, UNTIL--

WELL, VIZIER? WHAT IS THE TALLY?

DEADLOCKED, SIRE.

AN EQUAL NUMBER OF AYE AND NAY VOTES.

IT SEEMS, ODIN, IT IS UP TO *THEE* TO BREAK THE--

ODIN!!

FORGIVE ME FOR DISTURBING THY COUNCIL, ALL-FATHER BUT I BRING DIRE NEWS!

I HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH MONITORING EVENTS ON MIDGARD, SIRE, AND...AND--

GO ON-- *SPEAK.*

F-FORGIVE ME, SIRE, I KNOW 'TWILL SEEM IMPOSSIBLE, BUT...

WELL, AN UNKNOWN TROLL--ONE SUCH AS ARE FOUND IN THE CAVERNS--HAS SOMEHOW ESCAPED ASGARD AND IS EVEN NOW WREAKING HAVOC ON MIDGARD BELOW!

LOKI'S WORK, NO DOUBT, OR EVEN TYR'S-- IN A BID TO *FORCE* ME BACK TO MIDGARD. BUT I BESEECH THEE, MY FATHER, LET THEIR RUSE *SUCCEED!*

BREAK THE DEADLOCK IN THEIR AND MY FAVOR! I *WANT* TO RETURN TO MIDGARD!

I HEAR THEE, THOR...YET I AM DIVIDED BETWEEN WANTING MY SON HERE AT MY SIDE AND LETTING HIM FOLLOW HIS HEART'S DESIRE. HOW MAY I BREAK SUCH A *PRIVATE* DEADLOCK--?

THERE IS NO NEED, ALL-FATHER!

I SHALL BREAK THE DEADLOCK!

LADY SIF--!

AND NOW THOR'S HEART IS ALSO DIVIDED, BETWEEN HIS LOVE FOR SIF AND HIS YEARNING FOR EARTH...

I LOVE THOR MORE THAN ANY OF THEE MAY KNOW, AND MY LOVE GREW EVEN STRONGER YESTERDAY MORN--

--WHEN TYR CAME TO MY CHAMBERS UNBIDDEN AND PLEDGED *HIS* LOVE TO *ME*...

SO, TYR--THE ANCIENT LAW WAS FAR FROM YOUR *SOLE* REASON FOR THIS CHARADE! THY LOVE FOR SIF--*THAT* WAS THE OTHER, UNKNOWN REASON FOR THY ACTIONS!

I SHALL DEAL WITH THEE LATER!

BUT EVEN THOUGH MY HEART CRIES OUT FOR THOR TO REMAIN AT MY SIDE...I KNOW IT IS BUT A SELFISH CRY...AND MY TRUE AND UNSELFISH LOVE WHISPERS TO ME TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE...

KNOWING THAT THE LOVE SHARED BY US BOTH CAN AND SHALL ENDURE ANYTHING.

FOR THESE REASONS I VOTE... AYE. LET THOR'S REQUEST BE GRANTED.

THE DEADLOCK IS BROKEN. THE DECISION IS CLEAR.

AND TYR IS HEREBY *BANISHED* IN PUNISHMENT OF HIS FOUL DEED...

NAY, FATHER! I BESEECH THEE...

TAKE MERCY ON TYR. IT WAS BUT HIS LOVE FOR FAIR SIF WHICH CAUSED HIS DEEDS--

--AND I, OF ALL THE GODS IN ASGARD, KNOW HOW *POWERFUL* SUCH A LOVE CAN BE.

VERY WELL, MY SON.

TYR HAS FALLEN FROM FAVOR--

--BUT HE MAY REMAIN IN THE PRESENCE OF GODS, INDEBTED TO MERCY.

AND THOU, THOR...

THOU HAST THY PERMISSION TO JOURNEY TO MIDGARD AND DO BATTLE WITH THE TROLL--

"--THENCE TO FOLLOW WHATEVER PURSUITS THOU DEEMEST NECESSARY. FARE THEE WELL, MY SON. LET ALL ASGARD BID THEE SAFE PASSAGE."

YOU HAVE MY LOVE AS ALWAYS, FAIR SIF, AND MY EVERLASTING GRATITUDE AND RESPECT, AS WELL.

IN THY VOTE, THOU HAST LOST A LOVER, YET GAINED THE MOST THIS DAY...

...IN NOBILITY AND GRACE.

AND NOW, BY THE POWER OF MJOLNIR, MINE ENCHANTED URU HAMMER--

--I TAKE MY LEAVE OF THE SHINING REALM, AND JOURNEY TO MIDGARD!

FAREWELL, BRAVE HEIMDALL! GUARD WELL THE RAINBOW BRIDGE-- AND THE PORTALS TO ASGARD!

AYE, THOR-- WITH MY LIFE!

AND, AS THE GODS RETURN TO THE PALACE...

GOOD NEWS, MY HUSBAND!

THY PLAN WORKED--THOR HAS BEEN SENT BACK TO MIDGARD!

WHAT?! BY THE VOTE?!

YES-- I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE *PLEASED*, LOKI...

THEN THE TROLL MAURGLON WASN'T EVEN NEEDED! I'VE WASTED A RESOURCE BETTER HELD FOR SOME FUTURE DAY--!

AH, WELL, AT LEAST THERE IS SOME SMALL JOY...

"--KNOWING THAT THE TROLL WILL CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THOR ON EARTH."

HURRY WITH THAT BAZOOKA!

DO YOU HEAR ME, MORTALS?! I AM *MAURGLON* AND--

FIRE!

EH--?! WHAT MANNER OF SORCERY--?!

BOOM

A THUNDERBOLT-- SHATTERING THE GROUND UNDER MY FEET--

--PLUNGING ME DOWN INTO SOME FOUL-SMELLING CAVERN!

OBOY. LOOKS LIKE THE "A" TRAIN'S GONNA BE DELAYED AGAIN.

MEANWHILE, LIKE A COMET FROM THE HEAVENS, THOR MAKES HIS DESCENT...

NO SIGN OF THE TROLL...

NAUGHT BUT THE CITY'S EVERYDAY BUSTLE OF MADNESS...

'TIS A SIGHT TO GIVE ONE PAUSE--

--AND MAKE ME WONDER ***WHY*** I PREFER MIDGARD'S MEANER STREETS TO THE GLORY OF ASGARD'S SHINING AVENUES. PERHAPS 'TIS A MADNESS OF MY OWN, ONE WHICH -- EH?

NO! YOU CAN'T!

BUT WHY NOT, LISA? IF YOU CAN'T COME WITH ME, I ***HAVE*** TO STAY HERE.

BUT THE ***JOB***, JOHNNY...

I'LL GET A DIFFERENT JOB ***HERE***.

YOU CAN'T SACRIFICE THIS OPPORTUNITY, JOHNNY! YOU'LL NEVER FIND A BETTER JOB THAN THE ONE IN BOSTON...

IF IT MEANS LEAVING YOU, I DON'T ***WANT*** A BETTER JOB!

LOOK OUT! THE TRAIN--!

WHAT NOW? THEY SEND SOME GIANT BEAST AT ME--SOME SCREECHING SERPENT?!

MORTAL FOOLS!!

SKABOOM

MAURGLON HAS BESTED EVERY BEAST IN ASGARD! YOUR THREATS MEAN *NOTHING* TO ME!

LISTEN TO ME, LISA. TAKE EVERY DUMB CLICHÉ YOU'VE EVER HEARD--"I NEED YOU"--"I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU"--"YOU MEAN EVERYTHING TO ME"--"YOU'RE MY ONLY REASON FOR LIVING"...

TAKE 'EM ALL AND ROLL 'EM UP INTO ONE BIG BALL AND THEY STILL DON'T EVEN COME *CLOSE* TO PINPOINTING THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU.

MAYHAP *THIS* IS THE REASON FOR MY MADNESS...

A JOB IS ONLY *MONEY*, LISA, BUT YOU ...YOU'RE WHAT I *WANT*...

YOU'RE... *LOVE*.

ENOUGH, MORTALS!

EVEN A CAVERN-TROLL SUCH AS ME CANNOT ENDURE THIS FOUL HOLE OF YOURS!

IT'S TIME TO SEEK THE SURFACE--WHERE THE AIR IS FIT TO BREATHE!

TIME, TOO, TO SEEK MY ENEMY--*THOR!*

FREEDOM--THOUGH THE STENCH HERE IS EVEN WORSE THAN BELOW!

JOHNNY--! WH-WHAT IS IT?!

I...I DON'T KNOW!

UP HERE, JOHNNY--WE'LL GO THROUGH MY WINDOW!

EH--? MORE MORTAL FOOLS!

'TIS THE ESCAPED TROLL!

AYE--AND ONE I'VE FACED AND FOUGHT BEFORE!

THE CAVERN-TROLL *MAURGLON*--WHOM I BESTED AS A YOUTH!

HOLD, MAURGLON!

JOHNNY--YOU'RE FALLING!

THOR! THEN AT LAST I'VE DRAWN YOU OUT OF HIDING!

HOLD ON, JOHNNY--I'VE GOT YOU!

SUH-LANGG

AND NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, THUNDER GOD, YOU'LL WISH YOU'D *REMAINED* IN HIDING!

DO YOU HEAR ME, SWEET GOLDEN-TRESSED THOR? I'VE COME TO TAKE MY REVENGE ON YOU!

YOU TRICKED ME IN OUR FIRST MEETING--SEEMING TO BE SO YOUNG AND INNOCENT, SO RIPE FOR THE TAKING! YOU CAUGHT ME OFFGUARD!

NAY, MAURGLON! THE DECEIT WAS IN THINE OWN HEART!

SKRASH

YOU SOUGHT HELPLESS PREY, AND FOUND INSTEAD THE BEGINNINGS OF STRENGTH--

--A STRENGTH WHICH HAS NOW COME TO FULL TERM--

--AND WHICH SHALL BE WIELDED AGAINST THEE IN THY *FINAL DEFEAT!*

HELP ME, THOR! I CAN'T HOLD JOHNNY MUCH LONGER! I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH!

AND AID HER HE WOULD, WERE HIS OWN STRENGTH NOT PITTED IN SO FIERCE A TRIAL...

...A TRIAL, TOO, OF WILL AND COURAGE-- RAGING UP AND DOWN THIS LONG ALLEY...

SPOOM

...THIS FILTHY PLACE WHOSE LENGTH RECALLS, IN MOCKERY, THE GREAT HALL OF HIS EARLIER TRIAL IN ASGARD.

NOW, PRETTY THUNDER GOD--ARE YOU READY TO YIELD AND DIE PAINLESSLY?

NAY, MAURGLON-- FOR I FIGHT FOR A CAUSE NOW, A CAUSE NEARLY FORGOTTEN AND BUT RECENTLY RECALLED.

I FIGHT TO DEFEND MIDGARD!

MEANER AND PLAINER THAN ASGARD THOUGH IT BE, MIDGARD STILL BOASTS SCENES OF NOBILITY AND LOVE...

WHUMP

AND SINCE THE MORTALS HAVE SO MUCH MORE TO LOSE-- THEIR VERY *LIVES*--

FRAKT

--THE SCOPE OF THEIR NOBILITY AND SACRIFICE BECOMES ALL THE MORE PROFOUND...

AT TIMES, THEY ELEVATE THEMSELVES TO THE QUALITIES OF GODHOOD-- AND SO, FROM THEIR HUMBLE ORIGINS, THEY BECOME *GREATER* THAN GODS!

WHEREAS SOME SUCH AS THOU, MAURGLON, CAN ONLY REDUCE THE GLORY OF ASGARD TO ASHES!

FROM THE MORTALS, I TAKE INSPIRA-TION!

FROM THEE, NAUGHT BUT SHAME!

FROOOM

AND SO LONG AS I BREATHE SWEET LIFE, I SHALL ALLOW NO EVIL FROM ABOVE TO LAY THEM LOW!

THE TROLL LIES STILL, HEAPED IN GARBAGE, AND THE THUNDER GOD SPINS TO THOSE WHO HAVE GRANTED HIM INSPIRATION...

PLEASE, THOR-- HE'S SLIPPING FROM MY GRASP!

YOU SEE, LISA? I KNEW YOU WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD ME!

BUT TALK ABOUT THE NICK OF TIME, THOR...!

YOU...YOU SAVED OUR LIVES FROM THAT MONSTER, THOR! HOW CAN WE THANK YOU? WHAT CAN WE SAY?

SAY NOTHING, MORTALS...FOR THY LOVE HAST ALREADY SPOKEN ELOQUENTLY...AND PERMIT ME TO SAY BUT ONE THING TO *THEE*...

FOLLOW THY HEART. 'TIS THE ONLY PATH WORTH TREADING.

THEN, IN A SHIMMERING...

LOOK! THE MONSTER--IT'S DISAPPEARING!

LOKI'S DOING, NO DOUBT, AGAIN PROVING THAT GLORIOUS ASGARD HOSTS ITS SHARE OF EVIL...

...EVEN AS MIDGARD HOSTS ITS SHARE OF GLORY.

FARE THEE WELL, MORTALS. THY FUTURE IS BRIGHT. . . .

SO NOW MY CHOICE IS CLEAR IN REASON...

I HAVE CHOSEN TO DWELL IN MIDGARD BECAUSE I FEEL NEEDED HERE--BECAUSE THERE BE MORE HERE TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT.

THUS, I AM THANKFUL THAT I HAVE WON MY TRIAL...

...AND I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE TRIAL OF MY MORTAL FORM COMES TO A SIMILAR FAVORABLE RESULT.

EPILOGUE

LATER, IN DR. DONALD BLAKE'S APARTMENT...

BAD NEWS, BLAKE.

THE REVIEW HAS COME TO A DECISION, THEN, DR. JEFFRIES?

NO NEED NOW. A BUDGET CUT JUST CAME DOWN-- DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THE CLINIC WILL BE ABLE TO STAY OPEN. AS THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE STAFF, YOU'D BE LET GO ANYWAY, REGARDLESS OF THE REVIEW'S FINDINGS.

SORRY, BLAKE.

YES, DR. JEFFRIES... SO AM I.

FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP AND RIGHT BACK DOWN TO THE BOTTOM AGAIN.

WHAT NOW?

NEXT: DRAX THE DESTROYER!

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS™

MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO WRITERS	KEITH POLLARD PLOT and LAYOUT ASSIST ARTIST	GENE DAY EMBELLISHER	JOE ROSEN LETTERER	GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORIST	JIM SALICRUP EDITOR	JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LAST FLIGHT OF THE VALKYRIES!

ATOP A ROCKY PRECIPICE, NINE WARRIORS KNOWN AS **VALKYRIES** GAZE AT WHAT LITTLE THEY MAY SEE OF THE MISTY REALM AROUND THEM.

HALT YE, MY SISTERS, THAT WE MAY SURVEY THIS AWFUL LAND TO WHICH WE HAVE COME...

...COME TO LIBERATE IN THE NAME OF OUR LIEGE, ALL-MIGHTY *ODIN*--RULER OF *ASGARD*--WHO E'EN NOW DOTH FOLLOW CLOSE BEHIND!

ONCE, IT WAS A PROUD AND SUNLIT DOMAIN NAMED **VALHALLA**--THE PLACE WHERE ASGARD'S HONORED DEAD SPENT A JOYFUL ETERNITY.

NOW, IT HAS BECOME A BLEAK AND FOREBODING LAND SINCE CONQUEST BY **HELA**, NORSE GODDESS OF **DEATH**...**HELA**, WHO HAS MADE IT ONE WITH HER OWN DREAD REALM--**NIFFLEHEIM**.

VALKYRIES--ATTEND. HELA MUST SURELY BE AWARE OF OUR PRESENCE AND WILL SOON TEST OUR METTLE, KNOWING WE SEEK TO CONFRONT HER. WE MUST E'ER BE ON OUR GUARD AND--

VALTRAUTA--*LOOK!*

ISSUING FROM WHAT WAS ONCE VALHALLA'S HALL OF HEROES--WINGED DEMONS!

NAY. NOT *DEMONS*--

"--BUT MEN. THOSE MOST NOBLE DEAD WE DID BRING HERE AGES AGO FROM A THOUSAND BATTLEFIELDS AS WE TOILED IN THE SERVICE OF ODIN...WHEN SUCH WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE VALKYRIES.

"BUT CURSED HELA HATH *TWISTED* OUR GOOD WORKS TO HER OWN VILE ENDS--MAKING THOSE BRAVE AND SELFLESS KNIGHTS REGENTS IN HER CAUSE. YET, WE MUST NOT BE SWAYED FROM OUR MISSION."

TO SAVE THEIR SOULS WE STRIKE--

--FOR ODIN AND THE REALM ETERNAL!

VICTORY FOR OUR QUEEN HELA--AND THE NEW VALHALLA! VICTORY!

I BE SURPRISED, LEITA, THAT THOU COULD LASH OUT AT ONE THOU DID BRING TO VALHALLA ATOP THY WINGED STEED CENTURIES PAST.

CAN IT BE THOU DOST NOT RECOGNIZE *HAROKIN THE BRAVE?*

DO NOT SEEK TO DISSUADE ME, DECEIVER. FOR THOU ART NOT WHAT ONCE THOU WERE.

THOU SPEAK TRUE, NOW I OWE ALLEGIANCE ONLY TO THE GODDESS HELA-- AND I DO STRIKE SOLELY ON HER BEHALF!

AAGGHH!

THE ENEMY SEEMS ENDLESS IN NUMBER, AND THOUGH THEY WERE NOW BUT EIGHT--

--STILL DO THE VALOROUS VALKYRIES STRIVE IN A MANNER BEFITTING ASGARD'S FINEST.

AWAY--AWAY WITH THEE, EVIL ONE! I'LL NOT FALL TO THE LIKES OF THEE!

SPAK

LET ***DEATH*** DISPEL THY ILLUSIONS, GRIM GERDA FOR, IN HELA'S DOMAIN-- ***WE*** BE SUPREME!

ULLGHH!

THE SOUND OF SWORD ON SHIELD RESOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE EERIE LANDSCAPE. FOR A TIME, THE LIVING HOLD THEIR OWN.

AND THEN...

ARCHERS! FIRE AT WILL! LET THY ARROWS PIERCE THE HEART OF EVERY FOE!

THE SHAFTS STRIKE TRUE.

AND, IN INSTANTS, LIFELESS RIDERS AND STEEDS ALIKE TUMBLE GROTESQUELY GROUNDWARD.

NOW YE BE BUT *FOUR* IN NUMBER. WILL YE SURRENDER TO SUPERIOR FORCES OR MUST THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUE?

E'EN IF BUT *ONE* OF US REMAINED, SMUG ONE...

...THE BATTLE WOULD CONTINUE TILL THOU ART DEFEATED, HAROKIN.

SO SPEAKS VALTRAUTA!

AS YE WISH! STILL, I AM A GENEROUS GOD, AND TO REWARD THY SPIRIT, I OFFER YE THE HONOR OF EXECUTION BY VERY SPECIAL ENEMIES.

I CALL 'PON THE POWER GRANTED ME BY QUEEN HELA--AND WITH A GESTURE...

--I BID THEM RISE!

NAY! NAY IT CANNOT BE!

ART THOU NOT PLEASED, VALKYRIES--

"--THAT THE LAST SIGHT YE WILL SEE IN THIS LIFE--

"--BE THAT OF YE SISTERS COMING FORTH TO *SLAY* YE?"

"FIGHT ON, IF YE WILL, FOR 'TWILL MAKE OUR FINAL VICTORY ALL THE MORE SWEET."

ONCE, YE WERE CALLED "CHOOSERS OF THE *SLAIN*," VALKYRIES, WHEN YE DID THE BIDDING OF ODIN.

AND NOW YE BE COUNTED AMONG THAT NUMBER YESELVES. WHAT WOULD HE SAY, I WONDER, IF HE COULD SEE YE NOW. HAH HAH HAAA...

PERHAPS THE MAD HAROKIN WILL SOON RECEIVE HIS WISH, FOR AT THAT MOMENT, THE KING OF ALL ASGARD PASSES THROUGH THE WALL OF FLAME INTO VALHALLA.

'TWAS NECESSARY FOR ME TO STAY BACK FOR AWHILE, GIRDING MYSELF-- CONSERVING MY STRENGTH FOR THE FINAL BATTLE WITH HELA.

NOW, 'TIS TIME TO SEE HOW MY VALKYRIES HATH FARED 'GAINST HELA'S SURROGATES.

UNERRINGLY, THE LORD OF ASGARD MOVES THROUGH THE THICK MIST, DRAWING HIS MOUNT, EIGHT-HOOVED **SLEIPNIR,** SUDDENLY TO A HALT.

HE STRIDES BOLDLY TOWARDS THE SCENE OF CARNAGE, HIS FEAR OF WHAT WILL BE SEEN NOT SHOWN IN HIS PURPOSEFUL STEP. HIS LONE EYE FALLS ON THE BODIES OF HIS BELOVED VALKYRIES...

...AND THE GOD OF GODS WEEPS.

VALTRAUTA...THY BLOOD NOW STAINS THE VERY GROUND THEE AND THY SISTERS CAME TO RECLAIM.

AND 'TIS ODIN'S FAULT ALONE! I SHOULD HAVE STAYED WITH YE THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY!

SLEEP NOW. THY LIFE HATH NOT BEEN TAKEN IN VAIN... THIS I SWEAR TO! ODIN WILL DO ALL WITHIN HIS POWER TO END THE RULE OF HELA HERE IN VALHALLA.

AND WHEN THE WAR 'TIS OVER, YE SHALL ARISE AS SUBJECTS OF THE REALM ETERNAL AGAIN.

BUT FOR NOW...SLEEP.

HEAR ME, HELA. WHERE'ER THOU MAY BE!

ODIN HATH LOST MUCH WHICH BE PRECIOUS TO HIM THIS DAY-- AND HE SHALL NOT REST 'TIL THOU HAST ***PAID*** IN MEASURE FULL!

BY ALL THE HEAVENS ABOVE-- THOU SHALL SUFFER MY WRATH!

SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE GRIEVING ODIN... THE DEATH-GODDESS SMILES.

NEXT: DAY OF RECKONING!

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THE MIGHTY

THOR™

I BEG YOU, THUNDER GOD, DESTROY ME--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!!

pollard

DEATH CRY OF DRAX THE DESTROYER!

ALSO FEATURING THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN CALLED MOON DRAGON!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

MOON DRAGON--MISTRESS OF MENTAL AND MARTIAL ARTS, TRAINED AND GROOMED BY MENTOR AND SENSIA ON SATURN'S HOLLOW MOON TITAN TO ASSUME THE MANTLE OF CELESTIAL MADONNA...UNTIL ANOTHER WAS CHOSEN IN HER PLACE.
DRAX THE DESTROYER--ONCE A NORMAL MAN WHO MET HIS DEATH IN A FIERY CAR CRASH AND WHOSE SOUL WAS SHAPED BY THE TITANS MENTOR AND KRONOS INTO A NEW KIND OF BEING WHOSE SOLE REASON FOR EXISTENCE WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEATH-GOD THANOS.
AND THOR--IMMORTAL LORD OF THUNDER, SON OF ODIN, SCION OF ASGARD, WHO HAS CHOSEN TO CAST HIS LOT AMONG THE MORTAL HUMANS OF EARTH.
NOW, THE FATES OF THESE THREE EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS ARE DESTINED TO INTERTWINE IN--
ACTS OF DESTRUCTION

DOUG MOENCH *WRITER* and KEITH POLLARD *LAYOUT ARTIST* / D. GREEN & P. MARCOS *EMBELISHERS* / JANICE CHIANG *LETTERS* / GEORGE ROUSSOS *COLORS* / JIM SALICRUP *EDITOR* / JIM SHOOTER *EDITOR-IN-CHIEF*

THE DAY, FOR DR. DONALD BLAKE, LOOKS GRIM...

WELL, NOW THAT I'VE LOST MY POSITION DOWN AT THE CLINIC DUE TO LACK OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING--

--WHAT NEXT?

THERE SEEMS TO BE NOTHING FOR ME TO DO, NO PLACE FOR ME TO GO, NO FUTURE FOR ME HERE IN--

DON BLAKE?

SPEAKING.

GOOD-- THIS IS SHAWNA LYNDE IN CHICAGO, DON. DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

SHAWNA! OF COURSE I REMEMBER YOU! WE GRADUATED MED SCHOOL TOGETHER!

WITH HONORS, NO LESS. LISTEN, DON, THE REASON I'M CALLING-- I'VE ORGANIZED A SEMINAR ON NEW SURGICAL TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE 23rd NEXT MONTH.

SORT OF A STATE OF THE ART REFRESHER COURSE. WE'D LIKE YOU TO ATTEND, PERHAPS EVEN GIVE A LECTURE.

NEXT MONTH? WHY YES, I THINK I COULD MAKE IT, SHAWNA.

GOOD, I'LL MAIL YOU THE PARTICULARS.

SO HOW IS YOUR PRACTICE, DON?

I...UH, CLOSED MY PRACTICE SOME TIME AGO, SHAWNA.

I'VE BEEN ON STAFF AT A LOCAL CLINIC, BUT FUNDING CUTBACKS JUST PUT AN END TO THAT TOO. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'VE BEEN THINKING OF TAKING SOME TIME OFF TO PONDER THE FUTURE.

WISH I COULD DO THE SAME.

BUT LISTEN, AS LONG AS YOU'RE FREE, WHY NOT PLAN TO STAY A FEW EXTRA DAYS? I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND CHICAGO. OKAY? GOOD-- SEE YOU NEXT MONTH, DON.

MIGHT AS WELL-- NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO... BUT IN THE MEANTIME, IT'S BACK TO SQUARE ONE.

LOST AND LONELY, WITH NO REAL GOAL OR PURPOSE--

--AND FAR TOO MUCH SELF-PITY.

MEANWHILE, IN THE COLDLY GLITTERING VASTNESS OF NEAR-SPACE, A STRANGE CRAFT WANDERS AIMLESSLY.

ITS PILOT AND SOLE PASSENGER IS THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN KNOWN AS **MOON DRAGON**...

ASIDE FROM MY OCCASIONAL DEALINGS WITH THE AVENGERS, THERE IS NO REASON FOR ME TO REMAIN ON EARTH-- NOTHING TO HOLD ME...

EVEN THOUGH I WAS BORN ON THE PLANET, IT IS NOW DIFFICULT FOR ME TO EMPATHIZE WITH NORMAL HUMANS AND THEIR SMALL AFFAIRS.

AND EVEN TITAN, WHERE I WAS RAISED, NO LONGER HOLDS GREAT ATTRACTION FOR ME, NOT SINCE THE CHOICE WAS MADE.

MENTOR, I ADMIT, WAS AN **EXCELLENT** SURROGATE FATHER --

"-- AS HE AND SENSIA TRAINED ME IN THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ARTS, GROOMING ME TO OPPOSE THANOS AND THEN BECOME THE CELESTIAL MADONNA--

"-- SHE WHO IS DESTINED TO BRING NEW COSMIC LIFE TO THE UNIVERSE.

"BUT THEN IMMORTUS CHOSE **MANTIS** TO BECOME THE MADONNA... AND THOUGH I FEEL NO RESENTMENT OR SPITE, THERE **WAS** DISAPPOINTMENT...

"... A CRUEL LACK OF FULFILLMENT..."

... AND NOW I HAVE BEGUN TO FEEL THE FULL VOID OF PURPOSE, DESTINY, COMMITMENT -- AND MY THOUGHTS INCREASINGLY DWELL ON THE PAST... AND ON MY **REAL** FATHER.

"I WAS SO YOUNG, I BARELY REMEMBER THE NIGHT WHEN I DROVE THROUGH THE NEVADA DESERT WITH MY MOTHER AND FATHER, YVETTE AND ART DOUGLAS...

"WE NEVER EVEN *SAW* THE SPACESHIP...

"... BUT ITS CAPTAIN -- HATED *THANOS* -- TOOK NO CHANCES...

"... SEEKING TO PRESERVE HIS SECRECY BY ELIMINATING ALL POTENTIAL WITNESSES.

"MIRACULOUSLY, I SURVIVED AND WAS EVENTUALLY BROUGHT BY MENTOR TO TITAN -- TO BECOME MOON DRAGON -- BUT OF MY MOTHER AND FATHER, I ONLY KNEW THAT THEY WERE DEAD.

"I LEARNED ONLY MUCH LATER THAT MY FATHER'S SOUL HAD ALSO BEEN RESCUED BY MENTOR, AND GIVEN TO THE GRASP OF *KRONOS* THE SUPREME TITAN.

"THAT SOUL WAS THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW CREATION -- *DRAX THE DESTROYER* -- A BEING CREATED FROM DEATH AND DESIGNED FOR ONE PURPOSE... *TO DESTROY THANOS.*

"BUT EVEN WHEN I LEARNED THAT MY FATHER WAS *NOT* COMPLETELY DEAD, THAT HIS SOUL LIVED ON IN THE FORM OF DRAX --

"-- I WAS NEVER ABLE TO GET CLOSE TO HIM, TO *KNOW* HIM...

"... AND WHILE IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE TO FEEL ANY FILIAL AFFINITY WITH ONE WHO HAS BECOME A TOTAL DESTROYER... I NOW FEEL THAT I MUST AT LEAST *TRY*..."

...MUST TRY TO GET A *MENTAL FIX* ON HIS *ESSENCE*...

...LOCATE HIM WHEREVER HE --*YES!*

I CAN "SEE" HIM--STREAKING THROUGH SPACE...

"...BEYOND THIS SOLAR SYSTEM..., HEADED IN THE DIRECTION OF SIRIUS..."

STILL I REMAIN A USELESS FORCE IN THE COSMOS--A SPARK OF LIFE WITHOUT GOAL OR PURPOSE!

I HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED BY THANOS OF A NORMAL LIFE--OF EVEN KNOWING MY DAUGHTER!

AND EVEN THOUGH I WAS PERMITTED TO LIVE ON, IT WAS ONLY AS A SINGLE-MINDED ENTITY OF OBSESSION, WITH NO ROOM FOR THE CHERISHED ASPECTS OF LIFE--

--NO ROOM FOR ANYTHING BUT THE SINGLE GOAL OF DESTROYING THANOS, HE WHO HAD DESTROYED *ME*.

"BUT THE FINAL IRONY WAS DARK--

"--FOR IT WAS THE KREE WARRIOR CAPTAIN MAR-VELL WHO ULTIMATELY DESTROYED THANOS, THUS DEPRIVING ME OF MY SOLE REASON FOR EXISTENCE.

"IT MADDENED ME, DROVE ME BERSERK, UNTIL I ATTEMPTED *MAR-VELL'S* DESTRUCTION.

"EVEN I KNEW THIS WAS WRONG YET, I WAS THE DESTROYER...

"WHAT ELSE COULD I DO BUT *DESTROY*?

"IT WAS MAR-VELL'S COSMIC ESSENCE OF LIFE WHICH FINALLY DROVE HOME THE ERROR OF MY OBSESSION-- AND I FINALLY LEFT HIM, HOPING TO EITHER CHANGE FROM A DESTROYER TO SOME KIND OF CREATOR...

"...OR, AT LEAST TO VOYAGE THE COSMOS UNTIL I COULD CONFRONT MY *OWN* DESTRUCTION."

BUT MY FIRST HOPE WAS IN VAIN. OUT HERE, ALL BEYOND MAR-VELL'S INFLUENCE, I REALIZE THAT THE CONCEPT OF BECOMING A CREATOR IS--FOR ME--A JEST OF HUGE AND DARK PROPORTIONS.

THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME, THEN, BUT TO SEEK MY OWN DESTRUCTION AND--

--EH? THAT SHIMMERING GLOBE! WHAT MANNER OF--

HALT! COME NO CLOSER --ON PERIL OF YOUR LIFE!

IT... IT'S COMMUNICATING WITH SOME FORM OF TELEPATHY! IT'S... *ALIVE!*

WE ARE *MANY* LIVES BUT OURS IS A CLOSED ECOSPHERE WHICH CAN BROOK NO INVASION. SHOULD YOU TRY TO PENETRATE OUR HIVE...

YOU WILL BE *DESTROYED!*

THE CHOICE HAS BEEN MADE.

NO! HALT!

DO NOT TRY TO PENETRATE US!

AND THOUGH THE MANY TELEPATHIC VOICES SCREAM IN UNISON...

--IT IS FAR TOO LATE FOR REASONING WITH THE MIND OF THE DESTROYER.

EVEN WITH ALL THE DESTRUCTIVE FORCE AT MY COMMAND, I COULD NOT SHATTER THE THING--COULD BARELY PENETRATE IT!

AND YET THIS FAILURE IS WHAT I *WANTED*...

IT IS WHAT THE DARKNESS IN MY SOUL CRAVED -- FATAL, FINAL *FAILURE*.

NOW, CREATURES, DO WHAT YOU MUST...

...DESTROY ME!

A STRIDENT SOUND MUCH LIKE A THOUSAND SHRIEKS OF AGONY PIERCES THE DESTROYER'S MIND...

AND THEN--

IT IS DONE...A SACRIFICE OF ONE FOR THE GOOD OF ALL. WE HAVE LOST ONE OF OUR COMPONENTS BUT THE WHOLE IS INTACT... THE HIVE PRESERVED.

LET US REJOICE...AND LAMENT.

A JOLT OF PAIN-- THE MENTAL LINK HAS BEEN DISTURBED.!

SOMETHING HAS JUST HAPPENED TO DRAX-- MY *FATHER!*

I... I CAN SENSE THAT HE'S STILL ALIVE -- BUT HIS MENTAL AURA IS SO WEAK THAT HE MUST SURELY BE DYING!

I'VE GOT TO REACH HIM *QUICKLY!*

AND THE BIZARRE CRAFT LEAPS AHEAD AT FULL POWER.

MEANWHILE, AT BLAKE'S NEW YORK APARTMENT, THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN.

THIS TIME IT'S MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST TONY STARK...

HOW ABOUT DINNER NEXT THURSDAY AT EIGHT, DON? I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU.

SOUNDS GREAT, TONY--SEE YOU THEN.

THE GLUMNESS RETURNS AS SOON AS HE RACKS THE PHONE...

I FEEL LIKE A MAN WHOSE FUTURE CONSISTS OF TWO EVENTS. I'VE GOT TO DO *SOMETHING*--AND IF BLAKE IS PRETTY MUCH USELESS FOR THE TIME BEING...

...THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME TO *CHANGE* MATTERS, AND BECOME...

BOOM!

--THOR THE MIGHTY!

GONE IS THE SIMPLE WALKING STICK, REPLACED BY THE ENCHANTED MALLET *MJOLNIR* --AND IN THE LAME PHYSICIAN'S PLACE THERE NOW STANDS A GRIM GOD OF THUNDER...

...SCION OF VAUNTED ASGARD, BUT ADOPTED SON OF LOWLY EARTH.

HE SCOURS THE MANHATTAN SKIES, CRAVING SOME SENSE OF PURPOSE, SOME CONSTRUCTIVE COURSE OF ACTION, BUT--

'TIS A RARE, CALM NIGHT--WHEN EVEN EVIL AND VIOLENCE SEEM CONTENT TO SLUMBER IN PEACE...

AND FOR THAT I SHOULD BE THANKFUL, AS SHOULD ALL THOSE WHO DWELL IN THE CITY--YET IT DEPRIVES EVEN THOR OF ANY MISSION OR DUTY.

ON PURE WHIM, HE SWERVES SHARPLY TO THE EAST...

IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE I LAST SAW MY FELLOW AVENGERS. I SHALL TAKE THE PHONE CALL FROM IRON MAN--IN THE GUISE OF TONY STARK --AS AN OMEN, AND USE THIS IDLE TIME TO VISIT THE MANSION...

AND, IN SPACE...

THERE HE IS!

BUT SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM! HE'S HURT--NEAR DEATH!

I'VE GOT TO GET HIM INTO THE SHIP AT ONCE!

A LANCE OF LIGHT ENFOLDS THE LIFELESS, FLOATING BODY--AND THE TRACTOR BEAM PULLS DRAX TOWARD THE WAITING AIRLOCK...

...AND HIS DISTRAUGHT DAUGHTER.

MY MENTAL POWERS CAN'T GET THROUGH TO HIM-- IT'S AS IF THIS GROTESQUE THING ATTACHED TO HIS HEAD IS OBSTRUCTING MY MENTAL PATH!

I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING FAST--GET HELP--BUT THERE'S NO ONE TO TURN TO...UNLESS--

THE AVENGERS! PERHAPS ONE OF THEM CAN HELP!

GONE NOW IS MOON DRAGON'S NORMALLY IMPERIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE HUMAN RACE, GONE IS HER HAUGHTY DISDAIN...

...AND AS HER CRAFT ARROWS FOR EARTH, SHE IS NOTHING BUT A DAUGHTER WITH A FATHER SHE HAS NEVER KNOWN ...A FATHER WHO IS DYING.

AVENGERS MANSION...

MASTER THOR--IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, SIR! DO MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE!

THOR THANKS THEE, JARVIS. ARE THE OTHERS PRESENT?

NO, SIR-- THEY'RE ALL ATTENDING TO PERSONAL MATTERS. WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME TEA, PERHAPS?

NAY, JARVIS--I WOULD BE ALONE FOR THE NONCE.

AS YOU WISH, SIR.

THE DAY THEN IS DESTINED FOR BOREDOM.

BUT WHAT DID I EXPECT --? TO ARRIVE JUST AS SOME DIRE MENACE THREATENED? NAY, I AM SIMPLY RESTLESS HERE ON MIDGARD.

YET EVEN ON ASGARD, I FELT PURPOSELESS, MERELY ANOTHER GOD AMONG SO MANY...

HAVE I BECOME A BEING, THEN WHOSE EXISTENCE--BOTH MORTAL AND *IMMORTAL*--IS DEVOID OF MEANING AND PURPOSE? AM I TRULY UNNEEDED ANYWH--

THOR.

EH--? MOON DRAGON--AND THE DESTROYER, HE WHO IS CALLED DRAX! BUT WHAT--

"I CAME HERE FOR HELP, THOR, LANDED MY CRAFT ON THE ROOF--AND I'M GLAD TO FIND YOU ALONE. AFTER ALL, YOU *ARE* A GOD--"

"I HAVE A CARE, MOON DRAGON..."

I HAVE CHOSEN TO DWELL ON EARTH PRECISELY BECAUSE I BELIEVE *ALL* MORTAL LIFE TO BE JUST AS PRECIOUS AS MINE OR THINE...

YES, YES, I KNOW YOUR FOOLISH BELIEFS--BUT YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME! I FOUND DRAX FLOATING THROUGH SPACE WITH THAT--

...THAT *ALIEN THING* ATTACHED TO HIM!

IT BEGAN TO *GLOW* AS SOON AS I ENTERED EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, AND I'VE BEEN RELUCTANT TO REMOVE IT FOR FEAR THAT...

GET THEE BACK, MOON DRAGON!

IT'S BLAZING BRIGHTER!

THE EXPLOSION, THOUGH SOUNDLESS, IS NO LESS TERRIFYING--AND A BITTER, RANCID ODOR FILLS THE MANSION'S DRAWING ROOM.

BUT INSTEAD OF SPELLING DRAX'S DOOM...

WH-WHAT...? WH-WHERE...?

THOR! MOON DRAGON!

THEN I'M BACK ON EARTH? I SOUGHT ONLY TO DESTROY MYSELF--AND YOU BROUGHT ME BACK HERE--PRESERVED MY LIFE! HOW *DARE* YOU!

YOU--YOU WHO WERE ONCE MY DAUGHTER! HOW COULD YOU *DO* THIS TO ME?!

I'LL *DESTROY* YOU-- DESTROY *EVERYTHING!* KEEP DESTROYING UNTIL SOMEONE OR SOMETHING FINALLY SUCCEEDS IN DESTROYING *ME!*

HE'S GONE *BERSERK*, THOR! THAT THING ON HIS HEAD-- IT'S DRIVEN HIM *MAD!*

I CAN'T SOOTHE HIM! IT PREVENTS ME FROM REACHING HIS MIND AND-- *UHN!*

FOOLS! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I HAVE NO REAL LIFE--JUST A MOCKERY OF EXISTENCE--AND THAT IS WITHOUT MEANING OR PURPOSE.

S- STOP HIM, THOR... SAVE HIM...

WE UNDERSTAND NOTHING, DESTROYER, SAVE THE IMMEDIACY OF THY UNPROVOKED ATTACK!

IT MUST BE STOPPED!

I ONLY ASK THAT YE FORGIVE THE FORCE OF MY REPRISAL WHEN THY SANITY RETURNS!

THROOM

BUT FOR NOW, THOU HAST DEPRIVED ME OF ANY CHOICE!

ART THOU CALMER NOW?

HAST THY SANITY BEEN RESTORED TO THEE?

MASTER THOR! I WAS IN THE BASEMENT WHEN I HEARD SOUNDS, AND-- GOOD LORD!

GET THEE AWAY, JARVIS!

JARVIS? YES, THE AVENGERS' BUTLER...

A HARMLESS MAN--AND YET, IF MY LIFE IS WITHOUT MEANING, THEN HIS IS MEANINGLESS TOO...

...AND DESERVING OF DESTRUCTION!

GET DOWN, JARVIS. LET. ME SHIELD THY--AGH!

MASTER THOR!

LEAVE ME, SIR, AND DEFEND YOURSELF--I'M NOT WORTH IT!

A PITY, THOR--I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD BE THE VICTOR...

BUT IF YOU CANNOT DESTROY ME... THEN, I MUST DESTROY YOU!

NO, FATHER--I CANNOT ALLOW IT!

I HAD HOPED MY MARTIAL ARTS WOULD NOT BE NEEDED -- THAT I COULD SOLVE THIS WITH MY MENTAL POWERS.

CHUD

...BUT AS THOR SAID, YOU LEAVE US NO CHOICE!

THEN *USE* YOUR MARTIAL ARTS--DO YOUR BEST AND YOUR WORST--BUT DO NOT CALL ME YOUR FATHER!

ART DOUGLAS WAS YOUR FATHER AND HE IS DEAD --I AM ONLY THE DESTROYER!

SO DESTROY ME IF YOU CAN--OR SUFFER DESTRUCTION YOURSELF!

IS THERE NO WAY TO HALT DRAX'S FURY WITHOUT SEVERELY INJURING HIM--?

MAYHAP MOON DRAGON WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE THING ON HIS HEAD...

IF SO, THEN I MUST EXERCISE MY POWER AS THE LORD OF STORMS--

--CALLING FORTH THE LIGHTNING!

THOR! WHAT ARE YOU--

NOOOO!!

--THAT I MAY USE ITS FURY TO SEPARATE YON THING FROM HIS HEAD!

ZZZHHZZHT

FOR LONG MOMENTS, DURING WHICH THE VERY AIR HUMS AND BURNS, THE ALIEN ENTITY SUSTAINS ITS LEECHLIKE CLING..

...BUT FINALLY.

UHNNNN.

'TIS DONE.

WH-WHAT...? WH-WHERE...?

THOR! MOON DRAGON!

THEN I'M BACK ON EARTH! I SOUGHT ONLY TO DESTROY MYSELF--AND YOU BROUGHT ME BACK HERE-- PRESERVED MY CURSED LIFE! HOW *DARE* YOU?!

THEN HE...HE REMEMBERS NOTHING, THOR! BUT AT LEAST HIS MIND IS NOW FREE--PERHAPS I CAN REACH HIM...

THOU CANST *TRY*, MOON DRAGON.

SOOTHE YOURSELF, DRAX. LET MY MIND ENTER YOURS AND--

NO! I WANT ONLY DESTRUCTION! I WANT YOU TO--

--DESTROY ME.

PLEASE, I BEG YOU-- DESTROY ME. WITHOUT MY HIVE, WITHOUT OTHERS LIKE ME, THERE IS NOTHING TO LIVE FOR. MY PURPOSE HAS BEEN SERVED. THERE IS NO MEANING FOR ME...

NO... MEANING?

WHEN THE GREEN ONE THREATENED OUR HIVE, IT WAS MY DUTY TO DESTROY HIM.

BUT HE CLUNG TO LIFE AND I CLUNG TO HIM, BOTH OF US IN A DEEP SLEEP NEAR DEATH.

WHEN WE ENTERED THIS WORLD'S ATMOSPHERE, I SENSED DANGER AND BEGAN TO FEED ON HIS REMAINING LIFE, INTEGRATING WITH THAT LIFE...

LIKE A PARASITE.

BUT NOW...NOW THAT WE ARE SEPARATED...

...NOW, THAT I AM ALONE IN THIS STRANGE PLACE ...WITHOUT EVEN HIM TO SHARE MY LIFE...THERE IS NO REASON TO GO ON...

...NO MEANING... NO PURPOSE...AND ONLY THE HOPE OF DESTRUCTION.

THE TELEPATHIC MESSAGE RINGS WITHIN THE MINDS OF ALL THREE, ONLY SUBTLY DIFFERENT IN ITS HAUNTING FAMILIARITY...

THEY DWELL, ON IT, LONG AND HARD, EACH IN HIS OR HER OWN WAY.

FINALLY, IT IS THOR WHO BREAKS THE SILENCE...

DRAX--KNOW YE WHERE YON THING DWELT?

Y-YES...YES, I DO KNOW.

THEN... WE COULD...

...RETURN IT TO ITS HIVE--TO ITS HOME. YES, MOON DRAGON... YES, MY DAUGHTER... WE *COULD* DO THAT.

AND IT WOULD BE A *GOOD* THING TO DO.

AND DURING THE JOURNEY, FATHER, PERHAPS WE COULD TALK OF THE PAST, AND OF OTHER THINGS TO DO... IN THE FUTURE...

"...A FUTURE WITH NO FURTHER ACTS OF DESTRUCTION."

THOR SMILES, BRIEFLY BUT FIRMLY, BEFORE TURNING BACK TO THE MANSION.

AND HERE I THOUGHT I HAD NOTHING TO DO FOR THE DAY. AH, WELL, THERE'S PLENTY TO DO *NOW*.

AYE, JARVIS, THERE IS INDEED *MUCH* A MAN MAY DO... AND MAYHAP EVEN MORE A GOD MAY DO. I THANK THEE.

FOR SIMPLY BEING WHAT THOU ART... AND FOR REMINDING ME OF THAT TREASURE.

BUT YOU SAVED *MY* LIFE, SIR. WHY ARE YOU THANKING *ME*?

FROM AFAR, A FAINT VOICE OF CORRECTION SPEAKS TWO WORDS INTO THOR'S MIND: "THANK *YOU*."

NEXT ISSUE: THE THUNDER GOD AND THE BI-BEAST

TALES OF ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS™

MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO — *SCRIPTERS*
KEITH POLLARD & GENE DAY — *ARTISTS*
JOE ROSEN — *LETTERER*
GEORGE ROUSSOS — *COLORIST*
JIM SALICRUP — *EDITOR*
JIM SHOOTER — *EDITOR-IN-CHIEF*

JUDGEMENT... and LAMENT!

ONCE, GOLDEN RAYS OF SUNLIGHT WARMED **VALHALLA**--THE NORSE DOMAIN OF THE DEAD, WHERE THOSE BRAVE WARRIORS LOST IN COMBAT SPENT A JOYFUL ETERNITY AMID THE SOUND OF ENDLESS BATTLE.

BUT THEN CAME **HELA**, DREAD GODDESS OF **DEATH**, WHO USURPED THIS PLACE WITH HER ICY TOUCH-- REMAKING IT IN THE IMAGE OF HER OWN KINGDOM, **NIFFLEHEIM**... COLD, CRUEL, FOREBODING.

NOW, **ODIN**, RULER OF THE GODS, HAS COME TO SET THINGS A'RIGHT.

'TWAS NOT ENOW THAT THOU DID FORCIBLY TAKE VALHALLA, HELA. NOW, THOU HAST E'EN SLAIN MY NINE *VALKYRIES*, WHO I DID SEND BEFORE ME.

THOU HAST AT *LAST* GONE TOO FAR-- AND WILL PAY FOR THY MISDEEDS.

I THINK NOT, BRASH ONE. FOR I RULE HERE AND THERE IS NAUGHT THOU CANST DO 'GAINST ME.

"BUT IF THOU MUST-- COME FORTH AND THE SAME FATE AWAITS THEE AS DID THY VALKYRIES--THY CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN..."

...THOSE NINE THOU DID SEND TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR THY "LIBERATION" OF VALHALLA.

AS I DISPENSED WITH THEM, SO SHALL I SOON DISPENSE WITH THEE.

BUT FIRST--I HOPE THOU DOST APPRECIATE THE WELCOME I HAVE PREPARED FOR THEE AND THE LIFELESS VALKYRIE THOU DOST CARRY.

WHY HAST THOU LEFT THIS SMALL PATCH OF VALHALLA AS IT ONCE WAS? WHAT FIENDISH PURPOSE DOTH IT SERVE?

I DID IT TO PLEASE THEE, MILORD--MAKE THEE FEEL COMFORTABLE IN VALHALLA, NOW THAT SO LITTLE OF IT DOTH RESEMBLE THE LAND THOU SCULPTED AGES AGO.

AN END TO THY TAUNTS, AND INSOLENCE, GODDESS. I SHALL HAVE NONE OF IT.

AS THOU WISH, WHITEBEARD... AN END TO IT.

WITH BUT A GESTURE, I DO CAUSE ALL ABOUT THEE TO WITHER AND FADE, 'TIL THE GARDEN BE DUST.

AS THOU ART BRINGER OF DEATH, SO 'TIS ODIN A GOD OF LIFE. I BID YE RISE, FLOWER AND LEAF...

...RISE AND BE RESTORED.

LET THY PARLOR GAMES CEASE, HELA. THOU HAST STOLEN VALHALLA FROM ME-- *TWISTING* IT TO THY VILE INTENT.

BUT NO LONGER.

PREPARE THEE NOW FOR THE JUDGEMENT OF ODIN.

JUDGEMENT? *THY* JUDGEMENT! HAST THOU GONE SENILE, OLD ONE?

'TIS HELA WHO IS THE POWER HERE-- HELA WHOSE WORD IS LAW!

VALHALLA BE MINE! MINE!

'TIS BEYOND ALL BELIEF. THOU WOULD *DARE* RAISE THY HAND IN ANGER 'GAINST ODIN?

THOU WOULD DARE?!

I BE DEATH INCARNATE, WHITEBEARD. AND DEATH DARES *ALL*.

SOON, WHEN THOU ART SLAIN, NOT E'EN ETERNAL ASGARD ITSELF SHALL BE SPARED MY TOUCH. ALL-- ALL SHALL PAY HOMAGE TO HELA.

BUT, FIRST THOU MUST O'ERCOME MIGHTY ODIN. HE, WHO BE THE WILL AND THE WAY AND THE LIGHT.

AND NE'ER SHALL THAT COME TO PASS.

LET THE STRENGTH DRAIN FROM THY BODY 'TIL THOU ART HELPLESS. AND LET IT THUS BE KNOWN FORE'ER THAT ODIN BE *SUPREME* O'ER ALL HE DOTH SURVEY.

BUT THAT DOTH MEAN LITTLE TO ME NOW.

THOUGH I HAVE BEEN CALLED OMNISCIENT--STILL DOTH THY MOTIVES BAFFLE ME.

WHY, HELA? WHY HAST THOU DONE THESE THINGS? SPEAK.

MONTHS AGO, WHEN THY SON *THOR* WERT NEAR DEATH, I DID COME TO CLAIM HIM.* BUT THOU DID SEND HIS TRUE BELOVED--*SIF*, TO HIS SIDE, AND SHE DID PLEAD THAT I TAKE HER LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR THOR'S. SO GREAT WAS HER PASSION--I WAS MOVED AS NE'ER IN MY EXISTENCE.

FEELINGS WERT AWAKENED WITHIN ME... FEELINGS OF COMPASSION--DESIRE... AND LOVE, AT LONG LAST, HELA KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A WOMAN. BUT, I BE GODDESS OF DEATH AS WELL, AND CAN NE'ER CONSUMMATE THESE LONGINGS... FOR ALL THAT I TOUCH TURNS TO DUST. A TRAGEDY NE'ER TO BE RESOLVED.

THEN, OF LATE THOU DID SET IN MOTION THE FORCES OF *RAGNAROK* WHICH I BE FATED TO LEAD INTO ASGARD ON THE EVE OF ITS DESTRUCTION, CLAIMING THE SLAIN FOR MY OWN, MY SPIRITS LIFTED AT THE THOUGHT--BUT 'TWAS NOT TO BE. THE RAGNAROK WAS A *FALSE* ONE, BROUGHT ABOUT BY THY TRICKERY,** THUS, E'EN MINE ORDAINED MISSION WAS DENIED ME.

I WEPT... AND PLOTTED MY REVENGE. WHILE THOU WERT OCCUPIED ELSEWHERE, I SEIZED VALHALLA, THY PRIZED DOMAIN, REMAKING IT AS NIFFLEHEIM, THAT ITS SOULS SWORE ALLEGIANCE ONLY TO ME. I SLEW YOUR VALKYRIES THAT YOU WOULD KNOW ANGUISH AND LOSS SUCH AS I HAVE SUFFERED. 'TWAS ALL FUTILE, NOTHING WAS GAINED. I SEE THAT NOW.

*THOR 190 **THOR 278-J.S.

HELA, NOT E'EN ODIN CHOSE TO BE ODIN. WHAT IS... IS. WE BE ALL CREATURES OF NECESSITY. AND NOT ALL THY TEARS MAY CHANGE THAT.

WOULD THAT I COULD OFFER THEE *HOPE*, BUT I CANST NOT.

HOPE DOTH BLOSSOM IN THE PRESENCE OF LIFE... AND THOU ART THE QUEEN OF DEATH.

BUT I MAY GRANT THEE ENLIGHTENMENT. OPEN THY MIND... LET MY WISDOM FLOW INTO THEE...

...AND THOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

THERE SHALL BE NO PUNISHMENT FOR THEE. THOU HAST ONLY THE PITY OF ODIN. I CARE FOR THEE...

...AS DO I ALL MY CHILDREN.

THY WORDS DO SOOTHE ME, ALL-FATHER... QUELL MY ANGER AND HURT... FOR NOW. THOUGH I CANST NOT SET TO SLUMBER THE MANY FEELINGS I HAVE AWAKENED...

...MAYHAP I CANST NOW LEARN TO DEAL WITH THEM AS BEFITS A GODDESS... AND A WOMAN.

GET THEE GONE, HELA. RETURN THEE NOW TO NIFFLEHEIM.

RETURN THEE TO WHERE THOU DOST BELONG.

SHE DEPARTS, TRAILED BY THE CHILL AND BILLOWING MIST WHICH HAS BLANKETED THIS DOMAIN.

AND WITH EACH RECEDING STEP SHE TAKES, THE TERRAIN ASSUMES ITS FORMER ASPECT...

...'TIL ONLY WISPS OF FOG BETRAY HER PAST PRESENCE.

SO BE IT. THE HALLS OF VALHALLA DO ONCE AGAIN SHINE. AND THE RAPTUROUS CLANG OF ARMOR IS HEARD AGAIN 'CROSS THIS THRICE-BLESSED LAND.

MY LIEGE! WHAT HATH OCCURRED? I, AND MY SISTER VALKYRIES WERT *SLAIN* BY HELA'S MINIONS. YET, WE HAVE AWAKENED-- AND WITH NO TRACE OF INJURY.

AHH... THAT ALL WOUNDS COULD BE SO EASILY MENDED. BUT THOSE OF THE HEART... AYE, THOSE OF THE HEART, BE BEYOND MY HEALING.

MY LIEGE, I DON'T...

COME, VALTRAUTA. LET US JOIN THY SISTERS, FOR ODIN DOTH WISH TO REJOICE...

...AND TO FORGET.

THE END

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KING-SIZE ANNUAL!

THE MIGHTY THOR™

AN ALL-NEW EPIC!

MILGROM

THOR AND UMAR ARE PAWNS IN A DEADLY GAME BETWEEN ALL-MIGHTY ODIN AND THE DREAD..

DORMAMMU!

Stan Lee presents: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

PROLOGUE: RANDY MOSSBERG IS ELEVEN YEARS OLD, BUT HE MAY NOT LIVE TO SEE TOMORROW'S SUNRISE. AN HOUR AGO, A CAR--TRYING TO BEAT A LIGHT THAT HAD ALREADY TURNED RED--SLAMMED HEAD-ON INTO THE BOY AS HE BICYCLED HOME FROM SCHOOL.

HE'S INCREDIBLY LUCKY, FOR ON DUTY TONIGHT IN THE TRAUMA CENTER AT NEW YORK'S FAMED BELLEVUE HOSPITAL, FILLING IN FOR A SICK COLLEAGUE, IS ONE OF THE FINEST SURGEONS IN THE CITY--DR. DONALD BLAKE.

BLOOD PRESSURE LOW, BUT FIRM. PULSE IS STEADY. SO FAR, HE'S HOLDING HIS OWN.

I DIDN'T THINK A BODY COULD BE HURT SO BADLY AND STILL SURVIVE. IT'S A MIRACLE HE WASN'T DEAD ON ARRIVAL.

CHILDREN--CLAMP--ARE EXTREMELY RESISTANT, DR. SULLIVAN. SPONGE. THE BOY'S MADE IT THIS FAR--HEMOSTAT--IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LOSE HIM NOW. SCALPEL.

MINUTES PASS, AN HOUR, THEN TWO...

I'M SORRY, DR. BLAKE. IN MY OPINION, THE LEG IS TOO BADLY SHATTERED TO SAVE.

I CONCUR, DOCTOR.

PHIL... MARY... HE'S ELEVEN YEARS OLD. IMAGINE GROWING UP AT THAT AGE WITH ONLY ONE LEG.

BETTER AN ARTIFICIAL--PROSTHETIC--LIMB THAN A REAL ONE THAT WON'T WORK.

IN THAT CASE, DOCTOR. LET'S MAKE SURE WE REPAIR THE LEG AS GOOD AS NEW.

IT'S **YOUR** DECISION, DR. BLAKE. I JUST FOLLOW ORDERS.

I SEE. VERY WELL THEN, PHIL, SHALL WE GIVE IT A TRY?

IN AN ANTEROOM, RANDY'S PARENTS WAIT, WONDERING IF THEIR CHILD WILL LIVE OR DIE, IF HE'LL BE WHOLE OR MAIMED. FOR THEM, TIME CRAWLS ALONG...

...AND EACH PASSING MOMENT IS AGONY.

IT IS NO LESS SO INSIDE THE O.R.*

BLAST! THE ARTERY'S RUPTURED-- HE'S HEMORRHAGING! CLAMP! AND A SUTURE --WITH THREE-OH SILK --AT ONCE!

*OPERATING ROOM-- DR. DAK.

MIKE, WHAT IF RANDY DOESN'T...?

DON'T THINK LIKE THAT, SOPHIE. WE CAN'T LOSE HOPE, NO MATTER WHAT.

CLOSE THE LEG, PLEASE, DR. SULLIVAN. WE'VE DONE ALL WE COULD.

HOLD ME, MIKE. I'M FRIGHTENED.

TAKE THE BOY UP TO INTENSIVE CARE. I'LL...

...I'LL TELL HIS PARENTS.

MR. AND MRS. MOSSBERG?

I'M DR. BLAKE. SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING SO LONG.

RANDY'S STILL IN SERIOUS CONDITION, BUT I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT. HE'LL NEED THERAPY FOR HIS LEG, BUT WITH WORK AND PATIENCE AND LUCK...

...HE SHOULD MAKE A COMPLETE RECOVERY.

HE'S ASLEEP NOW, UPSTAIRS IN INTENSIVE CARE. IT'LL BE QUITE SOME TIME BEFORE HE WAKES.

WE DON'T MIND, DOCTOR. WE'LL WAIT. AND DR. BLAKE--

--THANKS.

IT WAS AN HONOR WORKING WITH YOU, DR. BLAKE. I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH SURGICAL SKILL.

THAT'S VERY KIND, DR. SULLIVAN.

CALL ME MARY, PLEASE.

I, *UHM*--IT'S A LONG HOLIDAY WEEKEND AND I'VE NO PLANS. I WONDERED IF YOU HAD ANY?

OH, THAT'S ***VERY*** KIND. AND FLATTERING.

BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE. I'M GOING SKIING. SOME OTHER TIME PERHAPS.

SKIING?! IN MIDSUMMER?!

IN A NEARBY DESERTED OFFICE...

NOT SURPRISING. UNFORTUNATELY, I COULD HARDLY TELL HER THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ***DONALD BLAKE*** DOING THE SKIING...

TAP!

MARY SULLIVAN LOOKED SO CONFUSED.

...BUT THE ***MIGHTY THOR,*** GOD OF THUNDER!

AND THAT THIS MERRIMENT WOULD BE TAKING PLACE NOT ON EARTH...

...BUT IN *ETERNAL ASGARD*--WHERE, THROUGH THE DIMENSION SPANNING VORTEX GENERATED BY MY ENCHANTED MALLET, I NOW JOURNEY!

THE GREAT GAME!

Tale told By CHRIS CLAREMONT
Tapestry woven By LUKE McDONNELL & VINCE COLLETTA
Runes carved By ZALME, NOVAK, CHIANG
Hues Mixed By BONNIE WILFORD
Work overseen By DAVID KRAFT & CHRIS CLAREMONT
Realm Ruled By JIM SHOOTER

THE REALM ETERNAL IS A WORLD UNTO ITSELF, AS VAST AND VARIED AS EARTH, WITH WONDERS TOO NUMEROUS TO NAME, TOO AWESOME TO DESCRIBE. ONE OF THEM IS THE **SEA OF MARMORA**--MILE AFTER SEEMINGLY ENDLESS MILE OF SPECTACULAR DESOLATION, AN OCEAN OF **ICE**.

TO IT THIS DAY HAVE COME THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ASGARD, RACING THEIR ICE-BOATS--PATTERNED AFTER THE CLASSIC VIKING LONGSHIPS--DOWN SMOOTH, GENTLE-SLOPED SWELLS AND AROUND JAGGED, FROZEN WAVES. IT'S A SUPREME TEST OF COURAGE AND SEAMANSHIP--OF KEEPING THE WIND EVER AT YOUR BACK WHILE STRIVING NOT TO SMASH YOUR HULL TO KINDLING.

WITH THOR, ABOARD HIS ICEBOAT, ARE HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS, HIS TRUEST COMRADES IN ARMS--DASHING **FANDRAL**, MASTER SWORDSMAN AND GENTLEMAN ROGUE...

...VOLUMINOUS **VOLSTAGG**--A VERITABLE MOUNTAIN OF A MAN...

...GRIM **HOGUN**--WHOSE DEMEANOR IS AS FIERCE, WHOSE MACE AS DEADLY, AS DEATH ITSELF.

BESIDE THE THUNDER GOD AT THE TILLER IS HIS BELOVED, THE GODDESS **SIF**.

NEARBY STAND THE WARRIOR WOMAN, **HILDEGARD**, AND THOR'S DEAREST COMPANION, THE NOBLEST GOD IN ASGARD--PERHAPS IN ALL THE UNIVERSE--**BALDER THE BRAVE**.

LUSTY SHOUTS FILL THE AIR AS THE BOATS MANEUVER FOR POSITION. IT HAS BEEN A GRUELING, HARD-FOUGHT CONTEST BUT, AS THEY TURN ONTO THE HOMEWARD LEG...

...THOR'S CRAFT SURGES INTO THE LEAD.

THEN, WITHOUT WARNING, THE CAREFREE OUTING--ENDS!

BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN!

A SEA MONSTER!

OFT HAVE WE MEN OF ASGARD HUNTED THE UNDER-SEA CREATURES THAT DWELL BENEATH THE ICE, BUT NE'ER HAVE MINE EYES BEHELD SUCH A THING AS THIS!

TO ARMS, WARRIORS! OUR AID IS SORELY NEEDED BY OUR FRIENDS!

MERCIFUL FRIGGA!

THE BEAST SEEKS TO ***DEVOUR*** THOSE HURLED INTO THE WATER OR STRUCK SENSE-LESS ON THE ICE

NOT MERELY THEM, MILADY SIF. ***OUR*** CRAFT IS IMPERILED AS WELL! THE BEAST IS NOT ALONE!

MILORD THOR, FAST THOUGH WE ARE, WE'LL NOT REACH OUR FRIENDS IN TIME. WE ARE TOO FAR AWAY!

I LEAVE OUR SHIP AND CREW IN YOUR GOOD HANDS, SIF.

LEAD THEM WELL...

...WHILE THE GOD OF THUNDER FLIES TO THE SIDE OF THOSE WHO NEED HIM MOST.

HO, BEAST! I KNOW NOT WHAT FOUL PIT SPAWNED THEE...

KH-HOW!!

...BUT 'T'WILL GLADDEN THOR'S HEART TO SEND THEE *BACK* TO IT!

ARE YOU HURT, FAIR ONE?

N-NAY, MILORD. I AM WELL, THANKS TO THEE.

THESE CREATURES SEEM EAGER TO DO BATTLE, HOGUN.

SO 'T'WOULD SEEM, DASHING ONE. I WOULD NOT FAIN DISAP-POINT THEM.

HAVE AT THEE, DEMON-SPAWN-- *EH?!*

MILADY SIF, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! RETIRE AT ONCE, LEST--!

FIE UPON THEE, GRIM ONE.

AM I LESS A WAR-RIOR THAN YOU BECAUSE I AM A ***WOMAN?*** OFT HAS MY SWORD BEEN PROVEN IN THE PAST. IT--AND I--SHALL NOT BE FOUND WANTING THIS DAY, EITHER!

VOLSTAGG--BEHIND THEE! STIR YOURSELF--YOU ARE IN PERIL OF YOUR LIFE!

OH!!

THE LION OF ASGARD HAS NO WISH TO DUEL WITH GUPPIES. HAVE A CARE, SCALY ONE, LEST HE MAKE OF YOU...

ZOUNDS! MY FOOT DOTH SLIPS!

VOLSTAGG *FALLS!*

AH! AND LANDS, AS EVER, WHERE 'T'WOULD DO THE GREATEST GOOD. YOU WERE ***WARNED,*** MONSTER!

PLUMP!

AS ONE FALLS, ANOTHER TAKES ITS PLACE. THIS ATTACK IS AS UNNATURAL AS THE CREATURES THEMSELVES. WHO IS BEHIND IT? AND *WHY?!*

LEARN, MONSTER, THAT *NOTHING* CAN STAND AGAINST THE MIGHT...

BOOM!

...OF MINE ENCHANTED, TROLL-FORGED HAMMER, *MJOLNIR!*

THOR!!

MY LADY SIF!

SEEING HIS BELOVED IN PERIL...

...THOR LEAPS IMMEDIATELY TO HER DEFENSE, UNAWARE THAT-- EVEN AS HE DOES SO-- SIF SLYLY SMILES...

...AND DIS-APPEARS.

SIMULTANEOUSLY...

...THE BOAT'S MAIN-MAST--WEAKENED DURING THE BATTLE --**SNAPS**, AND TOP-PLES TOWARDS HIM.

THOR, ABOVE THEE! *DANGER!!*

THE WARNING--FROM THE **REAL** SIF, AT THE OTHER END OF THE VESSEL --COMES **TOO LATE.**

WHAM!

MILADY! THE SERPENTS RETREAT --AS SUDDENLY AS THEY ATTACKED!

MAINTAIN YOUR WATCH, WARRIOR--

--LEST THIS BE SOME CUNNING RUSE!

THE MAST KNOCKED THOR OVERBOARD--

--INTO THE WATER!

MILADY, COME BACK! IT IS NOT SAFE!

SAFER BY FAR FOR ME THAN FOR MY LORD!

IF THAT BLOW ROBBED THOR OF HIS SENSES, HE WILL SURELY DROWN!

THE WATER IS SO DARK-- MAY THE ALL-FATHER GRANT ME MY BROTHER HEIMDALL'S KEEN SIGHT, THAT I MAY SEE THOR.

THERE HE IS!

HE IS LIMP--AND BLEEDING! MY ARMOR WEIGHS ME DOWN, MAKES IT... HARD TO SWIM...

...AND THE SURFACE... SEEMS...SO FAR AWAY.

NO! I AM A GODDESS-BORN! I WILL NOT FALTER!

I WILL NOT *FAIL!!*

TO ME, WARRIORS! MY LORD HAS DESPERATE NEED OF YOU!

AS D-DO I! B-BY ODIN, NEVER HAVE I F-FELT SUCH C-C-COLD!

HERE, MI-LADY. THIS CLOAK WILL WARM YOU.

ALAS, I FEAR I SHALL NEVER BE TRULY WARM AGAIN.

CARRY THE THUNDER GOD TO HIS CABIN AND SUMMON THE PHYSICIAN. SET COURSE FOR HOME!

LATER...

...THE BOATS SAIL ACROSS THE **RAINBOW BRIDGE**--PAST **HEIMDALL**, GUARDIAN OF THE GATEWAY TO THE GOLDEN REALM--AND INTO THE FABLED HOME OF THE NORSE GODS, **ASGARD**. THOSE ABOARD WERE HAPPY WHEN THEY DEPARTED. THEY ARE GRIM NOW--FOR NOT ALL THEIR NUMBER ESCAPED UNSCATHED. SOME DIED IN THE BATTLE. SOME WILL DIE. SOME WERE MAIMED.

THOR IS ONE OF THE FEW WOUNDED. CHARACTERISTICALLY, HIS FIRST THOUGHT IS FOR THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.

BE NOT SO SAD, MY LOVE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. MORE WOULD HAVE PERISHED HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THEE.

MAYHAP--BUT I WOULD FEEL SO WERE BUT A ***SINGLE*** PERSON ONLY SLIGHTLY SCRATCHED! TO LOSE SO MANY, SIF...

HOGUN GREETS YOU, THUNDER GOD. HOW DO YOU FARE?

I LIVE, MY FRIEND. I AM WELL.

HE IS ***NOT*** WELL! THE BLOW THAT FELLED HIM WAS VERY NEAR ***FATAL***.

THE PHYSICIAN PRESCRIBES REST AND GENTLE CARE, FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS AT LEAST.

THE MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE OF MINE EARTHLY AVATAR, ***DONALD BLAKE***, CONFIRMS BOTH DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT, FAIR ONE. IN TRUTH, I FEEL AWFUL.

WORRY NOT. I SHALL CARE FOR THEE, DAY AND NIGHT, 'TIL YOUR HEALTH BE RESTORED.

IN THAT CASE, METHINKS I SHOULD BE ILL MORE OFTEN--***BY THE MAW OF THE MIDGARD SERPENT!***

MILORD! WHAT IS WRONG?! WHY DO YOU UTTER THAT MOST PROFANE OF OATHS?!

CANST THOU NOT ***SEE***?!?

WITCHFIRE, MY GOOD COMRADES--

--LIGHTING THE SKY ABOVE THE ALL-FATHER'S PALACE!

WE... SEE NOTHING THOR.

NOR... NOR DO I. NOW, IT IS GONE. BUT IT WAS THERE. I SAW IT!

SOME DEVILTRY IS AFOOT. FOLLOW ME--

--AND HOLD THY WEAPONS AT THE READY!

HALT! WHO APPROACHES THE PALACE OF THE ALL-FATHER, ODIN!

ODIN'S BLOODSON, THE GOD OF THUNDER-- THOR!

ALL APPEARS PEACEFUL, FANDRAL. NORMALLY, I WOULD DEFER TO THOR'S JUDGEMENT...

...BUT YE FEAR, AS I DO, THAT HIS INJURY HAS FLAWED THAT JUDGEMENT.

THOR FACES THE GUARDSMEN, HIS OWN THOUGHTS ECHOING FANDRAL'S AND TRIES DESPERATELY TO QUIET THE POUNDING IN HIS TEMPLES. THEN, ABRUPTLY, THE PAIN VANISHES...

...AND REALITY CHANGES AROUND HIM.

THOR, ARE YOU MAD?!

HELP ME RESTRAIN HIM, HOGUN LEST HE DOES THESE WARRIORS INJURY!

LET ME GO!

FOOLS! CAN YOU NOT SEE?! THESE ARE NOT LOYAL ASGARDIANS-- BUT DEMONS!

THE REALM IS THREATENED! WE...WE MUST... DEFEND... IT...

THOR!

HE SUFFERS FROM GRIEVOUS WOUNDS, YET YOU LET HIM BRAWL?!?

WE DID OUR BEST MILADY, BUT THE GOD OF THUNDER IS NOT EASILY STOPPED.

VOLSTAGG! THE PHYSI-CIAN--IM-MEDIATELY!

I GO, MILADY, WITH THE SPEED OF *HERMOD THE SWIFT!*

FORGIVE ME, HOGUN. I SPOKE WITHOUT THINKING, OUT OF CONCERN--NAY, FEAR--FOR HIM WHOM I LOVE.

YOU NEED NOT APOLOGIZE, SIF. I...UNDERSTAND.

FROM HIS WORDS AND DEEDS SINCE, WE FEAR HE MAY BE BRAINSICK.

WERE MY LORD THOR ABLE TO SPEAK, HE WOULD HIMSELF BEG PARDON FOR HIS ACTS, CAPTAIN. SINCE HE IS LAID LOW, FANDRAL MUST NEEDS DO SO IN HIS STEAD. HIS SKULL WAS CRACKED THIS DAY.

TAKE THOR TO HIS PALACE, *SILSKIRNIR.*

SAY NO MORE, FANDRAL. 'TIS KNOWN THAT THE GOD OF THUNDER IS NOBILITY INCARNATE. WE TAKE NO OFFENSE, FOR WE ARE CERTAIN NONE WAS INTENDED. WE WISH HIM WELL.

MY THANKS, CAPTAIN. YOUR GENEROUS SENTIMENTS ENOBLE YOU.

WELL, ISN'T THAT NICE. IF OUR DREAD MASTER WERE PRESENT TO HEAR SUCH PRAISE HEAPED ON HIS SERVITORS...

...THE HEAVENS WOULD SHAKE WITH HIS UNHOLY *LAUGHTER.*

THE POOR, DELUDED IDIOT. BY THE TIME HE AND HIS FELLOW ASGARDIANS REALIZE THAT WHAT THOR BEHELD WAS *REALITY,* WHILE THEY SAW ONLY ILLUSION...

...THEIR PRECIOUS REALM WILL BE *CRUMBLING* ABOUT THEIR EARS.

HOURS PASS, BEFORE THOR FINALLY WAKES...

MY HEAD-- IT NO LONGER ACHES!

I'M WEAK AS A CHILD, BUT I NO LONGER FEEL NAUSEOUS WHEN-E'ER I MOVE. THE CONCUSSION WAS EVI-DENTLY LESS SEVERE THAN WE FEARED. METHINKS THE WORST IS OVER.

WHAT'S THIS?! **LADY SIF**, BY MY BEDSIDE, ASLEEP...

...YET HOLDING HER BROADSWORD READY TO PROTECT ME SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.

ONCE MORE, I THANK THE FATES FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER. NEVER HAS A WARRIOR LOVED SO WORTHY A LADY.

NEVER HAS A WARRIOR FELT SO PROUD TO BE SO LOVED IN RETURN.

I MUST MOVE SILENTLY-- AND LIFT HER GENTLY. I DO NOT WISH TO DISTURB HER.

THAT ROUGH CHAIR IS NO FIT PLACE FOR THEE, MY DEAR ONE. REST HERE IN MINE OWN BED, 'TIL I RETURN.

THE NIGHT IS CHILL, BUT A CUP OF MULLED WINE SHOULD WARM MY BONES SOON ENOUGH.

YE LOOK SO... PEACEFUL, SIF. SO... HUMAN.

I AM A SON OF **MID-GARD**--OF EARTH--AS MUCH AS OF ASGARD. I LOVE BOTH REALMS, AM BOUND TO BOTH. I CAN NO MORE ABANDON ONE THAN THE OTHER.

I LOVE YOU. I WOULD **MARRY** YOU. AND IF I DID, WHAT THEN?

FOR YOU, WOULD I FORSWEAR MIDGARD, TO LIVE MY LIFE HERE IN ASGARD?

FOR ME, WOULDST YOU LEAVE ASGARD TO JOIN ME ON EARTH?

ODIN PRESERVE ME!

THE WITCHFIRES--THEY BURN BRIGHTER THAN EVER, LIGHTING UP ALL ASGARD LIKE THE NOONDAY SUN!

YET NO ONE SEEMS TO NOTICE!

NO ONE--SAVE *THOR*. BUT CAN I TRUST MINE OWN EYES? IN CASES OF SEVERE CONCUSSIONS, *HALLUCINATIONS* ARE NOT UNCOMMON. THOSE ELDRITCH LIGHTS, THE DEMONS MASQUERADING AS ODIN'S PALACE GUARD, COULD ALL BE PRODUCTS OF MY FEVERED IMAGINATION.

BUT I HAVE NO FEVER, NO PAIN, NO SYMPTOMS, OF SUCH AN AILMENT. DR. BLAKE WOULD SAY I AM WELL ON THE WAY TO COMPLETE RECOVERY.

STILL, ANY POWER SUFFICIENT TO CHALLENGE ODIN, SHOULD BE MORE THAN ABLE...

...TO *ENSORCEL* THE ENTIRE REALM!

THE STENCH OF *EVIL* FILLS THE AIR LIKE A MIASMIC FOG.

I FEEL IN MY SOUL THAT WHAT I SEE IS REAL. THOUGH I MAY INCUR THE WRATH OF THE ALL-FATHER...

...I MUST ACT ACCORDING TO THOSE BELIEFS, AND I MUST ACT *ALONE*.

THAT WAY, ODIN'S ANGER WILL FALL ON *MY* SHOULDERS ONLY, NOT SIF'S.

THE THUNDER GOD!

OPEN FIRE, BROTHERS! *SLAY HIM!*

I *WAS* RIGHT! YOU SHOW YOUR TRUE SELVES AT LAST!

VARLETS! THOU COULD AS EASILY SLAY A RAGING *HURRICANE!*

MY FATHER! YOUR SON IS HERE TO STAND BESIDE YOU, TO *DEFEND* YOU AND YOUR REALM--

--TO THE *DEATH!!*

CHAPTER 2:

THE GOLDAR GAMBIT

BY THE ETERNAL-- WHAT *MADNESS* IS THIS?!!

MY REVERED SIRE-- PLAYING A GAME OF *CHESS* WITH THE DREAD ONE HIMSELF--

DORMAMMU, LORD OF THE DARK DIMENSION!

AND FLOATING IN THE AIR ABOVE THEM, TWO VISAGES I REMEMBER FROM THE THANOS WAR: *LORD CHAOS* AND *MASTER ORDER*. THEY ARE PRIMAL FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE.

BUT CHAOS IS HUGE, DWARFING ORDER. I FEAR WHAT THAT PORTENDS.

"MY FATHER SEEMS SORELY PRESSED. IN BOTH NUMBER AND POSITION...

"... DORMAMMU HATH A CLEAR ADVANTAGE. HE TAKE'S ONE OF ODIN'S CHESSMEN...

"... AND THE IMAGE OF LORD CHAOS *GROWS* BEFORE MY EYES, WHILE THAT OF ORDER *SHRINKS*!

THE MEANING SEEMS CLEAR. ODIN CHAMPIONS ORDER; DORMAMMU, CHAOS.

SHOULD DORMAMMU TRIUMPH ON THE CHESSBOARD, AS SEEMS LIKELY, I FEAR THE RESULTS FOR THE UNIVERSE WOULD BE TOO TERRIBLE TO EVEN CONTEMPLATE.

I KNOW NOT HOW DORMAM-MU ENTICED MY SIRE INTO THIS PERFIDIOUS MATCH, BUT SUCH INFAMY WILL NOT GO UNCHAL--

UNNNGNH!

A MYSTIC BARRIER, SURROUNDING THE PLAYERS, KEEPING ME FROM THE DAIS!

WHAT CAN I DO?

WHAT SHOULD I DO?! PERHAPS ODIN ENTERED INTO THIS GAME OF HIS OWN FREE WILL!

REVERED FATHER, HEAR THY SON! GIVE ME A SIGN, THAT I MAY KNOW THY WILL!

HE DOTH NOT HEAR. HE DOTH NOT ANSWER.

BUT ALL IS NOT YET LOST. I MUST NEEDS TURN TO THE ONE WHOM MY LORD ODIN...

...TRUSTS ABOVE ALL ELSE.

GRAND VIZIER, I SEEK ENLIGHTEN-MENT.

A COMMEN-DABLE GOAL, YOUNG LORD.

I ASSUME I MAY BE OF AID TO THY QUEST.

EXPLAIN THE CHESS MATCH BEING PLAYED BETWEEN OUR LIEGE, ODIN, AND THE DREAD DORMAMMU.

WHAT MEANST THOU, THOR? THY SIRE IS AT REST, AS YE SHOULD BE AFTER THE INJURY THOU DIDST SUFFER EARLIER.

THOU DOST NOT BELIEVE ME?! BUT CANST THOU NOT SEE?!

THERE IS NOTHING ***TO*** SEE, THOR. THE ROOM IS ***EMPTY.***

FOR A MOMENT, THOR'S CERTAINTY WAVERS.

THEN, HIS EYES MEET DORMAMMU'S...

...AND THOR SUDDENLY FEELS A GLACIER OF ICE ENFOLD HIS SOUL...

...AS THE DREAD ONE -- IMPLACABLE FOE OF HUMANKIND -- SMILES.

TOO LATE, ODIN NOTICES THE INTRUSION, HIS COUNTENANCE BODING ILL FOR WHOEVER DISRUPTED HIS CONCENTRATION ON THIS FATEFUL GAME.

BUT NEITHER THOR NOR THE VIZIER SEE HIM MOVE...

...AND THE FORCE FIELD SURROUNDING THE DAIS PREVENTS THEM FROM HEARING HIS VOICE.

THOR, I PRAY YE STAY. LET ME SUMMON ATTENDANTS, TO ESCORT THEE TO THY SICKBED.

NAY, GRAYBEARD. MY FEET ARE SET UPON MY CHOSEN PATH. I WILL NOT TURN FROM IT. THERE IS BUT ONE IN ASGARD WITH THE POWER--AND THE WILL-- TO CREATE SO VAST AND ALL-EMBRACING AN ILLUSION.

HE WOULD THINK NOTHING OF BETRAYING THE REALM TO SUCH AS DORMAMMU.

MY SON BELIEVES THAT WHAT HE DOES IS RIGHT, THAT HE ACTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE REALM.

THAT MAKES HIM DANGEROUS.

TO ME, MY FAITHFUL RAVENS. THE BARRIER WILL NOT HINDER ELEMENTAL CREATURES SUCH AS THEE.

HEED MY WORDS, MUNIN AND HUGIN, AS THOR CANNOT. FOLLOW THE GOD OF THUNDER. LEARN WHERE HE GOES, WHOM HE SEES, WHAT HE DOES. THEN REPORT TO ME.

MY LORD ODIN, I DO BELIEVE...

...I HAVE PLACED YOU IN *CHECK.*

ALL SEEMS PEACEFUL AROUND HIS PALACE.

BUT NOT FOR NOTHING IS MY HALF-BROTHER NAMED THE GOD OF DECEPTION AND LIES.

LOKI!!

ARISE, PERFIDIOUS ONE! I WOULD HAVE WORDS, WITH THEE!

THOOM!!

ANSWER ME SWIFT AND STRAIGHT, LEST MY RIGHTEOUS WRATH GOAD ME TO VIOLENCE!

ART THOU MAD, THUNDER GOD?! WHY DOST THOU ASSAULT MY HUSBAND?!

YOUR PARDON, GENTLE SIGYN -- BUT I MUST KNOW WHAT TRUCK THY SPOUSE HATH HAD WITH DORMAMMU.

N-NONE!

THOU LIEST!

THEN SLAY ME AND HAVE DONE WITH IT!

BUT KNOW THAT THOU WILT HAVE THE BLOOD OF AN *INNOCENT* ON THY HANDS!

=WHUNFF!=

THY WORDS...

...HATH THE RING OF TRUTH.

ART THOU HURT, HUSBAND? TRULY, I HATH NE'ER SEEN THY BROTHER IN SUCH A MOOD. HAST THOU ANY IDEA WHY HE RAGES SO?

NONE. NOR CARE I TO LEARN. THOUGH I PRAY THAT HIS FURY LEADS HIM TO DISASTER, DEATH --AND *FELL DAMNATION!*

IT IS NO LESS THAN HE DESERVES.

WHAT AILS ME?! I AM BEHAVING LIKE A CHURL AND, WORSE, A CHILD--SMITING OBSTACLES AS IF MY GOOD RIGHT ARM ALONE WOULD WIN THE DAY.

I MUST THINK BEFORE I ACT. BUT, TO THINK, I MUST FIRST LEARN...

...AND WHERE BETTER TO DO THAT THAN THE ***WELL OF WISDOM!***

HO, ***MIMIR***, FIERY GUARDIAN OF THE SACRED WELL!

CEASE THY RAUCOUS PRATTLE, ODINSON. I KNOW WHY THOU HAS COME TO ME. THY SITUATION IS NO LESS DESPERATE THAN THAT OF ODIN HIMSELF.

HE HATH ESCAPED FROM CHECK, BUT AT THE COST OF A MAJOR PIECE. DORMAMMU CONTINUES HIS ATTACK, ALLOWING NOT A MOMENT'S RESPITE. THY SIRE SEEMS DOOMED.

ALL-FATHER HE MAY BE, CHESS-MASTER, HE IS NOT.

IT CHEERS THEE TO SEE HIM THUS?

AYE. FOR I ***HATE*** HIM; AS WELL YE KNOW.

TO LEARN THE TRUTH OF RAGNAROK, ODIN SACRIFICED AN ***EYE***.* WILL YE YIELD AS MUCH?

MINE... EYE?

'TIS A... ***SMALL*** PRICE, IF THY WORDS WILL SAVE THE REALM.

*THOR # 274--D.A.K.

PERHAPS THEY SHALL. PERHAPS NOT. THOU MUST JUDGE THAT FOR THYSELF.

DOST THOU PRESUME TO ***TAUNT*** ME, SPIRIT?!

THOU WILT TELL ME ***ALL*** I REQUIRE--AT ONCE--OR I WILL RAISE A TEMPEST SUFFICIENT TO ***DROWN*** THY FLAME, AND THY CRUEL, VINDICTIVE VOICE ***FOREVER!***

SPEAK, MIMIR! MY PATIENCE--AND THY TIME--GROWS SHORT!

STAY THY HAND, THUNDER GOD! THY POINT IS WELL MADE!

AS YE SURMISED, ODIN AND DORMAMMU REPRESENT THE PRIMAL UNIVERSAL FORCES, ORDER AND CHAOS. THEIR CHESS GAME WILL DETERMINE THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

CAN ODIN DEFEAT DORMAMMU?

NO.

CAN HE BE DEFEATED AT ALL?

CERTAINLY, IN HIS NATIVE REALM -- THE **DARK DIMENSION.**

THEN IT IS TO THERE THAT I MUST JOURNEY!

MJOLNIR ONCE MORE OPENS A GATEWAY BETWEEN THE MYRIAD PLANES OF EXISTENCE AND INSTANTLY TRANSPORTS THOR TO HIS DESTINATION.

FOOL! THOU THINK'ST THOU GOES TO SAVE ASGARD! **HA!**

SHOULD THY QUEST SUCCEED, SHOULD DORMAMMU BE FORCED TO LEAVE THE GAME, THOU SHALT INSTEAD SEAL ITS ETERNAL **DOOM!**

ABOVE, THE RAVENS SILENTLY OBSERVE...

...AND, WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT ITSELF...

...RETURN TO TELL ODIN WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED.

AH, BELOVED SON, THOU ART HEADSTRONG STILL. THOU DIDST ASK THE **WRONG** QUESTION: NOT "CAN" DORMAMMU BE DEFEATED -- ESPECIALLY BY THEE --

-- BUT **SHOULD** HE? THE ANSWER IS **NAY.**

THOU HAST DONE WELL, HUGIN AND MUNIN, BUT I HAVE WORK FOR THEE STILL. FLY TO THE **LADY SIF!**

CHILDREN CAN BE SO... ANNOYING. I WONDER HOW YOU TOLERATE IT?

YOUR GAME **SUFFERS**, ODIN. SEE? CHECK, AGAIN.

ARISE, SIF! THY LIEGE HATH **NEED** OF THEE!

HMNN--?! WHAT?!

ODIN'S RAVEN'S--SPEAKING WITH THE ALL-FATHER'S VOICE!

THEY BEAR MY WORDS. HEAR THEM GODDESS--AND **OBEY!**

QUICKLY, ODIN TELLS WHAT HAS OCCURED AND ISSUES HIS COMMANDS.

JUST AS QUICKLY, SIF DONS HER ARMOR...

...AND, USING HER SWORD'S MYSTIC ABILITY TO TRAVEL BETWEEN DIMENSIONS...

...SHE VANISHES FROM ASGARD...

...AND APPEARS AMIDST **CHAOS** PERSONIFIED.

GOLDEN APPLES OF IDUNN!

NE'ER HAVE I SEEN SO BIZARRE A PLACE. THERE ARE NO HORIZONS, NO WAY TO GAIN MY BEARINGS. EVEN AS FINE A HUNTER AS MY BROTHER HEIMDALL WOULD BE LOST HERE.

ODIN HATH SET ME AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK. THOR COULD BE ANY-WHERE--AND I DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO EVEN BEGIN TO SEEK HIM.

FEAR NOT ABOUT THAT, INTRUDER.

WHO--?!

HE WILL JOIN YOU SOON ENOUGH--

--IN THE LAND OF THE **DEAD!**

AHHRRR!!

PART THE THIRD:

SHALL CHAOS DIE?!

ELSEWHERE...

...THOR'S ARRIVAL ALSO DOES NOT GO ...UNNOTICED.

OD'S BLOOD--THIS UNHOLY LAND WAS AN AFFRONT TO MINE SENSES WHEN LAST I DID VISIT HERE.* IT HATH NOT IMPROVED WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

NOR HATH ITS DENIZENS.

*DURING THE LEGENDARY AVENGERS/DEFENDERS WAR, CIRCA AVENGERS #'S 116-118 & DEFENDERS #'S 8-11 -- DAK.

BUT NO MATTER HOW LARGE MY FOE, OR HOW STRONG--

--HOW MANY LIMBS IT BEARS, OR HOW WICKEDLY PERVERSE NATURE HATH ARMED IT--

--YET WILL THE GOD OF THUNDER *PREVAIL!*

CRONK

THE VICTORY IS MINE --OVER THE FIRST OF WHAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE *MANY* FOES. AND, I FEAR, THE *LEAST.*

WITH THE STAKES IN HIS INFERNAL CHESS GAME SO HIGH, DORMAMMU -- THROUGH HIS SERVITORS--

--WILL DEFEND HIS NOISOME REALM WITH ALL THE FORMIDABLE POWER AT HIS COMMAND.

THIS DIMENSION IS AS VAST AS IT IS CONFUSING.

I COULD SEARCH FOREVER AND NOT COME ANYWHERE NEAR MY GOAL...

...WERE IT NOT FOR THE DIRECTIONS MIMIR MYSTICALLY IMPLANTED IN MY BRAIN.

HER BODY WRACKED WITH PAIN FROM THE SORCEROUS BOLT THAT STRUCK HER DOWN, SIF STRUGGLES BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS--TO FIND HERSELF MANACLED TO A BLOOD-SCARRED ALTAR.

IN THE NAME OF MY DEPARTED BROTHER, SIF OF ASGARD, I BID YOU WELCOME.

I AM **UMAR**--CALLED BY SOME THE **UNSPEAKABLE**, BY OTHERS THE **UNMERCIFUL**. BOTH APPELATIONS ARE ACCURATE. I AM **SISTER** TO THE DREAD DORMAMMU.

YOU LIE BENEATH THE **G'URANTHIC GUARDIAN** --THE INSTRUMENT OF YOUR MOST--UNIQUE DEMISE.

WHY DIDST THOU ATTACK ME?! I CAME IN PEACE.

SUCH COY DISSEMBLING ILL BECOMES YOU, GODDESS. YOU CAME SEEKING THOR.

HOWEVER, SINCE **MY** MACHINATIONS BROUGHT HIM HERE, THAT IS SOMETHING I CANNOT ALLOW.

I CONJURED THE IMAGE OF YOU THAT LED TO HIS INJURY, SO THAT HE ALONE WOULD PERCEIVE THE **GREAT GAME**. I MAGICALLY INCREASED HIS NATURAL CONCERN SO THAT HE WOULD ACT HASTILY, WITHOUT THOUGHT.

MY SPELLS FURTHER ENSURED THAT ANY WHO FOLLOWED THOR WOULD BE DIRECTED INSTEAD TO ME, SO THAT I COULD DEAL WITH THEM.

WHY?! IN ODIN'S NAME-- **WHY?!?**

SIF'S ONLY ANSWER IS UMAR'S MOCKING TRIUMPHANT LAUGHTER.

AS THE SORCERESS-QUEEN VANISHES, THE GUARDIAN COMES ALIVE, BATHING SIF IN A LAMBENT BLUE LIGHT. INITIALLY, SHE FEELS NO ILL-EFFECTS.

SHE SUSPECTS THAT WILL SOON CHANGE, AND SHE HAS NO INTENTION OF WAITING FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.

SO MUCH FOR THESE CHAINS.

SNAP!

NOW TO-- YMIR'S ICY BREATH!

I...FEEL SO WEAK. I... CANNOT... STAND!

MY MIND -- IT BURNS!

IMAGES CASCADE PAST HER MIND'S-EYE: PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS.

LIKE A TIDE WASHING AWAY A BEACH, THE STATUE WIPES THEM FROM HER AWARENESS.

THOUGHTS FADE, FEELINGS FADE--ALL SHE IS, MUCH OF WHAT SHE WAS, IS SLOWLY, METHODICALLY, STRIPPED FROM HER.

TRY AS SHE MIGHT...

...SHE CANNOT STOP IT.

SHE SCREAMS--A RAW ANIMAL CRY OF RAGE AND DEFIANCE... AND TERROR...

SHE LUNGES TO HER FEET, PITTING HER INDOMITABLE WILL AGAINST THE ANCIENT POWER OF THE GUARDIAN. SHE TAKES A STEP..

...AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, UNTIL, FINALLY...

...SHE EMERGES INTO DARKNESS...

...AND COLLAPSES INTO BLESSED OBLIVION.

WITH ITS VICTIM SAFELY OUT OF RANGE, THE GUARDIAN BECOMES QUIESCENT ONCE MORE.

SHE LIES WHERE SHE FELL, BARELY BREATHING AS CLOSE TO DEATH AS A BODY CAN COME.

HER SURVIVAL IS A MIRACLE.

BUT IT MAY TURN OUT TO BE TRAGICALLY SHORT-LIVED.

NOT ALL THE DENIZENS OF THE DARK DIMENSION ARE HUMAN --SOME NOT EVEN REMOTELY SO. A FEW, ATTRACTED BY THE SCREAMS...

...HAVE COME IN SEARCH OF PREY. WHAT THEY FIND IS MUCH TO THEIR LIKING. CHITTERING EAGERLY...

...THEY CLOSE IN FOR THE KILL.

POSSIBLY NEARBY...

... POSSIBLY FAR AWAY...

... THOR CONTINUES HIS TREK THROUGH THIS DIMENSION'S FLUID, EVER-SHIFTING LANDSCAPE...

... ENJOYING A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE ALMOST CONSTANT BATTLES THAT HE HAS FOUGHT SINCE HIS ARRIVAL...

SCORES OF FOES HAVE I VANQUISHED--

--NONE OF THEM A TRUE MATCH FOR MY PROWESS.

WHY THEN AM I UNEASY?

BECAUSE THIS QUEST IS NOT THUS FAR A TRUE TEST OF MY METTLE?

OR BECAUSE SOME DEEPER, DARKER PURPOSE...

... IS AT WORK?

THE MORE I THINK ON THIS, THE MORE I QUESTION. AND THE MORE I QUESTION, THE MORE I *DOUBT!*

YET, FOR THE NONCE, I MUST PRESS ON--SLEIPNIR'S HOOVES!

A WOMAN--SCREAMING IN MORTAL PAIN!

THIS COULD BE A RUSE, TO LURE ME FROM MY APPOINTED PATH!

BUT NO MATTER THE COST, I MUST REMAIN TRUE TO MYSELF!

"... AND ANSWER THIS CALL FOR AID, AS I WOULD ANY OTHER!"

ONE DEMON TOUCHED HER AND SHE WOKE.

TOO WEAK TO STAND, MUCH LESS FLEE, SHE CAN ONLY STRUGGLE FEEBLY, FUTILY, AGAINST THE DEMON PACK. IN ANOTHER SECOND, THEIR CRUEL CLAWS WILL DRAW BLOOD. BUT FOR THESE MONSTROSITIES...

... THE SECOND NEVER COMES!.

BWHAM!

FOLLOWING HOT ON HIS MYSTIC MALLET, MJOLNIR'S HEELS...

...THE GOD OF THUNDER SOON TEACHES HIS INHUMAN FOES...

...THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS.

GOOD LADY, ART THOU HURT?

I SEE NO BLOOD, NO SIGN OF ANY GROSS EXTERNAL INJURY.

I THINK SHE IS MORE FRIGHTENED THAN HARMED.

HER GARMENTS ARE OF EARTH-- AND--'TIS MOST STRANGE--HER FORM SEEMS FAMILIAR!

CANST THOU HEAR ME? DOST THOU UNDERSTAND MY SPEECH?

HEART OF THE MOTHER-GODDESS.

YOU!

JANE FOSTER!

LONG AGO, AS DONALD BLAKE, THOR FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS NURSE, BEAUTEOUS **JANE FOSTER**. ODIN FORBADE THAT LOVE AND, EVENTUALLY, THE TWO PARTED, ONLY TO BE REUNITED MUCH LATER UNDER DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES. JANE WAS ON HER DEATH BED. THOUGH THEY WERE IN A SENSE, RIVALS FOR THOR'S LOVE...

...SIF SACRIFICED HERSELF TO IMBUE JANE WITH HER LIFE, FORCE AND STRENGTH, THOR MOURNED SIF, WHILE DISCOVERING THAT HE STILL LOVED JANE, AS SHE DID HIM.

AS TIME PASSED, JANE BEGAN TO TAKE MORE AND MORE OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF SIF, AS THE GODDESS' STRONGER PERSONALITY ASSERTED ITSELF. IN A BATTLE, IN ASGARD, JANE TAPPED SIF'S SWORD AGAINST A WALL AND--AS DONALD BLAKE WAS TRANSFORMED INTO THOR -- SO ALSO WAS JANE FOSTER TRANSFORMED INTO **SIF.** IN THOR'S CASE, HOW'EVER, THE PROCESS WAS REVERSIBLE. IN SIF'S, IT TURNED OUT IT WAS **NOT.***

* SEE JUST ABOUT EVERY ISSUE OF THE FERSHLUGGINER MAGAZINE. IF YOU THINK WE'RE GONNA LIST 'EM ALL, **FORGET IT!**--DAK.

CAN IT BE?! ART THOU TRULY JANE FOSTER REBORN?

OR IS THIS A VICIOUS DECEPTION ON DORMAMMU'S PART -- TO STRIKE AT ME THROUGH THE IMAGE OF MY LONG LOST LOVE?

I...I DON'T KNOW. MY THOUGHTS ...MEMORIES ARE SO HAZY. BUT I SEEM TO RECOGNIZE YOU -- AS A ...FRIEND -- OH!

INTERLOPER, PREPARE TO MEET YOUR WELL-DESERVED DOOM!

I HAVE HEARD DORMAMMU'S EARTHLY FOE -- DR. STRANGE, MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS -- SPEAK OF HER WITH RESPECT. SHE IS AS POWERFUL AS THE DREAD ONE, AS MAD AND TREACHEROUS AS LOKI.

THINE ENCHANTMENTS ARE NO MATCH FOR THE MIGHT OF MY TROLL-FORGED HAMMER, SORCERESS.

...AT THE HANDS OF UMAR!

YOU HAVE BUT ONE HAMMER, BLONDHAIR...

...WHILE I COMMAND A MULTITUDE OF SPELLS.

FLESH-EATING VINES! THEIR SAP BURNS LIKE ACID!

MY COMPANION SCREAMS -- IN TERROR AND PAIN!

I MUST NOT ALLOW A DROP TO SEAR HER FLESH, NOR A THORN TO SCAR HER SKIN.

THINE ATTACK WAS MOST IMPRESSIVE, LADY, BUT 'TWAS NOT ENOUGH TO LAY US LOW.

NOW, THOUGH, THOU WILT LEARN THAT THE GOD OF THUNDER IS AS APTLY NAMED AS THEE. BEHOLD, UMAR THE UNSPEAKABLE, AS THE WINDS OF THINE OWN WORLD GATHER THEE UP...

HA! EVEN AS YOUR POWER SUMMONS THESE "FORMIDABLE" BREEZES, LITTLE MAN, MINE BANISHES THEM, LEAVING ME UNTOUCHED!

...AND SWEEP THEE AWAY!

LET US NOW SEE YOUR VAUNTED MALLET WITH-STAND THE BALEFUL BOLTS OF BISHRU!

FOR SHAME, ENCHANTRESS. THOU MUST DO FAR BETTER IF THOU WOULDST HOPE TO VANQUISH A SON OF ODIN.

IF YOU INSIST, ASGARDIAN.

AHRRR!

ENERGY FIELD --CONSTRICTING --CRUSHING ME 'NEATH THE WEIGHT OF A SCORE OF PLANETS!

WHILE MY UNLIVING SERVITOR SQUASHES THAT UPSTART "GOD" TO PASTE...

...THE *CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORRAK* WILL PREVENT THE FEMALE FROM INTERFERING.

WHO IS SHE?! HOW CAME SHE HERE?

SHE DID NOT ACCOMPANY THOR, ALTHOUGH SHE IS AN EARTHLING. COULD SHE BE ONE OF DR. STRANGE'S DISCIPLES? BY THE PIT, I DID NOT ANTICIPATE HIS INVOLVEMENT. THAT COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING!

AVAUNT, THOU FOUL DENIZEN OF THIS UNSPEAKABLE REALM! THOU SHALT HOLD THOR--

--NO LONGER!

I WAS BRED TO THE WAYS OF CHIVALRY. A TRUE PRINCE SHOULD NE'ER STRIKE ONE OF THE FAIRER, GENTLER SEX.

BUT THOU ART AN *ABOMINATION*, UMAR, AN AFFRONT TO WOMANHOOD --INDEED TO LIFE ITSELF! THEREFORE, I WILL STRIKE THEE AS I WOULD *ANY* FEARSOME FOE!

YOU *DARE* LAY YOUR HANDS UPON MY IMPERIAL PERSON?

THOR -- OH, *NO!*

FOR THAT YOU WILL KNOW AGONY UNDREAMT OF-- BEGINNING WITH THE FULL FURY OF THE *FLAMES OF THE FALTINE!*

THOR!

OH, NO! THAT WITCH IS *KILLING* HIM!

MY HEAD--THROBBING--WAIT! MY THOUGHTS...ARE CLEARING! I--I REMEMBER WHO I AM!

MANY HAVE BOASTED THAT THEY WOULD SLAY, ME UMAR--

--YET I STILL LIVE!

AND BECAUSE MY CAUSE IS JUST, I STILL *PREVAIL!*

WITH A TERRIBLE SHRIEK--TORN FROM THE DEPTHS OF HER SOUL--

--UMAR COLLAPSES...

...HER GIANT SPIRIT-FORM SHRINKING RAPIDLY TO ITS NORMAL SIZE TO LIE HELPLESS AT THOR'S FEET...

I...I YIELD, THUNDER GOD. HAVE MERCY!

I WOULD HAVE ANSWERS, SORCERESS.

AS MUCH AS IT IS IN MY POWER TO RELATE, I WILL. YOU SEEK MY BROTHER'S DEFEAT IN THE *GREAT GAME*, DO YOU NOT?

THAT IS SIMPLY ACCOMPLISHED. ANY PLAYER WHO LEAVES THE MATCH BEFORE IT IS COMPLETED *FORFEITS* THE GAME.

I KNOW THAT BY AIDING MY SIRE IN SUCH A MANNER MAY BE AN IGNOBLE ACT, BUT WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?

TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE!

Ohhh

SOMETHING IS FUNDAMENTALLY *WRONG* ABOUT THIS SET UP--WHY DOESN'T THOR SEE THAT?!

I BREATHE. I FEEL. I LIVE I'M -- *ME* AGAIN!

BUT HOW?! BEFORE MY SPIRIT EXISTED IN STASIS--A KIND OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION --WITHIN THE MIND AND SOUL OF *SIF*. FOR ME TO BE RE-BORN, SOMETHING AWFUL MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO HER!

SHE CAME TO THIS PLACE FOR A PURPOSE--THAT MUCH I RE-MEMBER. IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT --CRITICAL-- ASKED OF HER BY *ODIN* HIMSELF. WHY CAN'T I THINK OF IT?!

DORMAMMU WILL ONLY RETURN IN RESPONSE TO A DIRE THREAT TO HIS SOVEREIGNTY--SAY, THE RELEASE OF THE BRUTISH, NIGH-INVINCIBLE *MINDLESS ONE*, IMPRISONED BY THAT MYSTIC ENERGY BARRIER.

IF YOUR CONSCIENCE IS DISTURBED BY THE THOUGHT OF PLACING INNOCENT LIVES AT HAZARD, YOU NEED NOT WORRY.

IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO BREACH THE BARRIER. THE MERE THREAT ALONE WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO BRING HIM HERE.

IN THAT CASE, SORCERESS, I WILL STRIKE--FOR MIDGARD AND ASGARD BOTH.

'BY ODIN'S EYE! THAT BLOW WOULD HAVE FELLED A SQUADRON OF STORM GIANTS, YET THE BARRIER IS NOT EVEN DENTED.

THIS HORRIBLE STATUE MEANS SOMETHING--AND I RECOGNIZE THAT PILE OF WEAPONS AND ARMOR!

THEY BELONG TO *SIF*.

MY HEAD IS THROBBING AGAIN. I HOPE IT'S A SIGN THAT I'M ABOUT TO REGAIN MY MEMORIES. THAT SHADOW ABOVE ME--WHAT?!

NO! OH, *NO!*

SRRRAWR!!

ALL OF THE DEMON PACK WERE SCATTERED BY THOR'S ATTACK. BUT NOT ALL FLED.

WITH FRANTIC, DESPARATE STRENGTH, THE YOUNG WOMAN WRIGGLES FREE OF THE CREATURE'S GRASP...

...AND SPRINTS FOR THE CLOSEST WEAPON AT HAND.

SURPRISINGLY, THE THOUGHT OF CALLING THOR FOR HELP NEVER ENTERS HER HEAD. WIN OR LOSE, LIVE OR DIE, THIS IS **HER** FIGHT.

AS HER HAND CLOSES ON THE SWORD'S HILT...

...THE DEMON'S CLOSES AROUND HER THROAT. HE STILL THINKS HER AN EASY KILL.

LET-- GO!

HE'S WRONG!

THOR'S ABOUT TO THROW HIS HAMMER. EVERY INSTINCT IN ME SCREAMS THAT WHAT HE'S DOING IS A MISTAKE.

THOR--DON'T!

NO. GOOD. HE CAN'T HEAR ME. HE'S TOO FAR AWAY-- I'LL NEVER REACH HIM IN TIME.

BUT ODIN WILLING, THIS SWORD *WILL!*

THE PRAYER COMES NATURALLY TO HER--ANOTHER SURPRISE-- AS DOES THE STRENGTH WHICH SUDDENLY FLOODS HER ARM AS SHE LETS FLY.

HER AIM IS TRUE.

KTANNG!

THOR, IT'S ME, JANE FOSTER! PLEASE, LISTEN! YOU MUST NOT SMASH THE BARRIER!

THY FEATURES ARE HERS, LADY. THY STRENGTH IS NOT.

THIS IS A MAGICAL DIMENSION. YE COULD BE AN *ILLUSION*.

THERE IS THE ILLUSION, MY DARLING-- *UMAR!* YOU DIDN'T DEFEAT HER. SHE LET YOU WIN!

YOU ARE DEMENTED, WOMAN.

SHOULD ODIN LOSE THE GREAT GAME, THE UNIVERSE WILL DISSOLVE INTO ETERNAL *CHAOS*. FORCING DORMAMMU TO LEAVE THE MATCH WILL ENSURE VICTORY FOR YOUR SIRE, ODIN, AND THE BEING HE CHAMPIONS, *MASTER ORDER*. IS THAT NOT WHAT YOU WANT?

YES, ODIN MIGHT LOSE--BUT IT WILL BE AN HONEST DEFEAT, A STRUGGLE FOUGHT WITH HONOR! ISN'T THAT BETTER THAN WINNING THROUGH WHAT AMOUNTS TO *TREACHERY?*

THY WORDS--I... BELIEVE THEM. WHAT AM I DOING? BY ALL THE GODS, WHAT HAVE I DONE?

HATH MY INJURY DRIVEN ME *MAD?*

NO CREDULOUS SIMPLETON, BOTH INJURY AND MADNESS WERE *MY* DOING!

YOUR WOMAN'S INTUITION WAS CORRECT, CURSE HER! HAD MY PLOY SUCCEEDED--

--HAD YOUR ACTIONS FORCED DORMAMMU HOME, *ODIN* WOULD HAVE STOOD ACCUSED OF CHEATING; AND THEREBY FORFEITED THE GAME. AND WHILE DORMAMMU WAS OCCUPIED WITH REPAIRING THE BARRIER--WHICH MY POWER WOULD HAVE SECRETLY HELPED YOU *BREACH*-- I WOULD HAVE STRUCK YOU DOWN!

YOU COST ME DEARLY, ASGARDIAN. AND YOU WILL PAY IN FULL MEASURE FOR THAT TRANSGRESSION...

...AS MY ELDRITCH *BOLTS OF BEDEVILMENT* INCINERATE YOU BOTH!

TO DO THAT, GIANTESS, YOU MUST FIRST CATCH US.

AS GOOD AS DONE.

DO YOUR BEST, THOR-- OR YOUR WORST--YOUR PITIFUL POWERS CAN NO MORE HARM ME...

...THAN THEY CAN PROTECT YOU!

--AND THEN *CRUSHED!*

THUS PERISH *ALL* WHO WOULD DEFY THE WILL OF *UMAR!*

FIRST, YOU WILL BE BOUND BY THE *RINGS OF RAGGADOR*--

SOMEDAY, MY HATED BROTHER, YOU WILL JOIN THIS UPSTART GOD OF THUNDER IN THE NETHER REGIONS--AS WILL DR. STRANGE! AND THEN, AT LAST, UMAR WILL REIGN SUPREME OVER *ALL CREATION!*

THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK CITY, ON A BALMY, SUMMER EVENING.

HERE, ON THE OBSERVATION ROOF OF THE SOUTH TOWER, 1/4-MILE ABOVE THE CITY...

...TOURISTS COME TO ENJOY A TRULY MAGNIFICENT VIEW. ON A CLEAR DAY, IT'S SAID, YOU CAN EASILY SEE OVER 40 MILES. BUT EVEN IN A CITY WHERE THE EXTRAORDINARY IS COMMONPLACE...

...FEW SIGHTS CAN EQUAL THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF THE GOD OF THUNDER AND HIS LADY WITHIN A COSMIC WHIRLWIND.

HOLY COW!

THOR, WE'RE ***HOME!*** BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE DEAD FOR CERTAIN!

THOU, LIKE UMAR, WERT DECEIVED, BELOVED. AS SHE CAST HER FINAL SPELL, I TRANSPORTED US TO SAFETY.

WHY DIDN'T YOU STAY AND FIGHT? AS I RECALL, IT ISN'T LIKE YOU TO RUN FROM A BATTLE.

THY MEMORIES ARE SOMEWHAT... OUT OF DATE. I HAVE LEARNED NOT TO FIGHT WHEN THERE IS NO NEED.

COME, JANE, WE MUST AWAY TO ASGARD, TO LEARN THE OUTCOME OF THE ***GREAT GAME.*** UMAR'S SPELLS PREVENTED MY RETURNING DIRECTLY TO THE GOLDEN REALM, THOUGH SHE CARELESSLY LEFT THE WAY OPEN TO EARTH--WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT US HERE.

IT'S SO...BEAUTIFUL.

THOR, WHAT'S TO BECOME OF ME? AM I TRULY JANE FOSTER, OR SIF, OR BOTH?!

I... DO NOT KNOW.

I WISH I DID. IT'S SO UNFAIR! I LOVE YOU. AND SHE LOVES YOU. I CAN'T LIVE IN ASGARD, BUT YOU CAN'T LIVE EXCLUSIVELY ON EARTH.

I UNDERSTAND THY FEELINGS. I, TOO, AM A CHILD OF BOTH EARTH AND ASGARD, AT HOME IN BOTH REALMS --YET TRULY AT PEACE IN NEITHER.

STAY, JANE. I MUST GO, BUT I WILL RETURN TO THEE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. A SOLUTION TO OUR DILEMMA WILL BE FOUND, THAT I PROMISE THEE.

A SOLUTION OF SORTS HATH ***ALREADY*** BEEN FOUND, BELOVED.

SIF!

I WAS ENSORCELLED BY UMAR AND HER G'URANTHIC GUARDIAN. THEY STRIPPED AWAY MY ASGARDIAN PERSONA...

...AND WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME WITH JANE FOSTER--

--EVENTUALLY BRINGING ABOUT THE DEATH OF THIS FORM WE SHARE--HAD NOT HER OWN NATURAL STRENGTH AND COURAGE CARRIED HER TO SAFETY.

BUT, EVIDENTLY, THE SPELL HATH NO EFFECT OUTSIDE THE DARK DIMENSION. ALL IS... AS IT WAS.

STAND BESIDE ME, GODDESS, WHILE MYSTIC *MJOLNIR* TRANSPORTS US FROM MIDGARD...

...TO THE *REALM ETERNAL!*

ART THOU WELL, SIF? I HEARD GREAT SADNESS IN THY VOICE.

JANE FOSTER HAS A SPIRIT, AND A LOVE FOR THEE, THAT WOULD DO ANY IMMORTAL PROUD. YET, THROUGH NO FAULT OF HER OWN, SHE IS IMPRISONED WITHIN MY SOUL. I KNOW NOT HOW SHE MIGHT BE FREED--NOR HOW, IF THAT WERE TO HAPPEN, WE THREE MIGHT LIVE IN HAPPINESS.

FOR ALL MY POWER, ALL MY KNOWLEDGE, I AM AS HELPLESS AS A BABE. I CAN ONLY MOURN FOR A DEAR FRIEND, LOST PERHAPS FOREVER, AND... HOPE FOR THE BEST.

THE PLAZA--INDEED, ALL ASGARD--IS UNCOMMONLY QUIET.

I SEE NO WITCHFIRES IN THE SKY, NOR ARE THERE ANY DEMON GUARDS ABOUT.

MY LORD--MY FATHER--IS ALL WELL WITH THEE?!

SON OF MY BODY, THOU MAY'ST APPROACH THE *PRESENCE!*

I CANNOT SEE THE CHESSBOARD--BUT IF DORMAMMU HATH WON, WOULD THE REALM BE SO PEACEFUL?

THOU WERT GIVEN LEAVE TO ENTER, NOT TO SPEAK.

YOUR PARDON, MY LIEGE. MY WORDS WERE PROMPTED BY CONCERN FOR THY WELFARE.

AS WERE THY DEEDS, NO MATTER HOW MISGUIDED.

BUT I WILL TOLERATE NO RAGAMUFFINS IN MY COURT. LET THOU BE CLAD IN RAIMENT BEFITTING THY STATION.

THY GENEROSITY KNOWS NO BOUNDS, MY LIEGE. BUT--THE *GAME*--?!

BEHOLD, MY SON.

ONLY *TWO* PIECES REMAIN --BOTH *KINGS!*

OF COURSE, THE *GREAT GAME* ENDED AS IT SHOULD--AS IT MUST--IN A *DRAW.* THUS IS THE COSMIC BALANCE MAINTAINED, WITH NEITHER ORDER NOR CHAOS GAINING ASCENDENCY.

YOU SEE, MY CHILDREN, 'TIS THE NATURAL ORDER OF EXISTENCE AND LIFE THAT THEY BE MADE UP OF EQUAL PORTIONS OF BOTH.

FORGIVE ME, FATHER. MY UNTHINKING IMPETUOSITY CAME NEAR TO DESTROYING US ALL!

THOU WERT UNDER UMAR'S DARKLING ENCHANTMENTS, THOR.

SUCH NEEDS NO FORGIVENESS.

BUT THY WILLINGNESS TO HAZARD ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE YE LOVED, DOES YE CREDIT. THOU HAST NOT ACTED WISELY, 'TIS TRUE, BUT THOU DIDST ACQUIT THYSELF SUPREMELY WELL. I AM *PROUD* OF THEE.

VIZIER, MAKE READY THE *BEDCHAMBER ROYAL!*

IN SOOTH, THIS HATH BEEN A MOST TRYING --AND TIRING--DAY.

THOR, SIF, TAKE THESE TOKENS OF MY APPRECIATION AND MY LOVE...

...TO COMMEMORATE THE PARTS THOU DIDST PLAY IN THE *GREAT GAME.*

PAWNS!

THINE, SIF, IS *WHITE*--ODIN'S COLOR--WHILE MINE...

...IS *BLACK.*

AH, MY LOVE, THIS PROVED NAUGHT BUT THAT EVEN THE MOST NOBLE HEART MAY BE DECEIVED INTO DOING ILL. WHAT MATTERS IS NOT THAT THOU WERT ENSNARED...

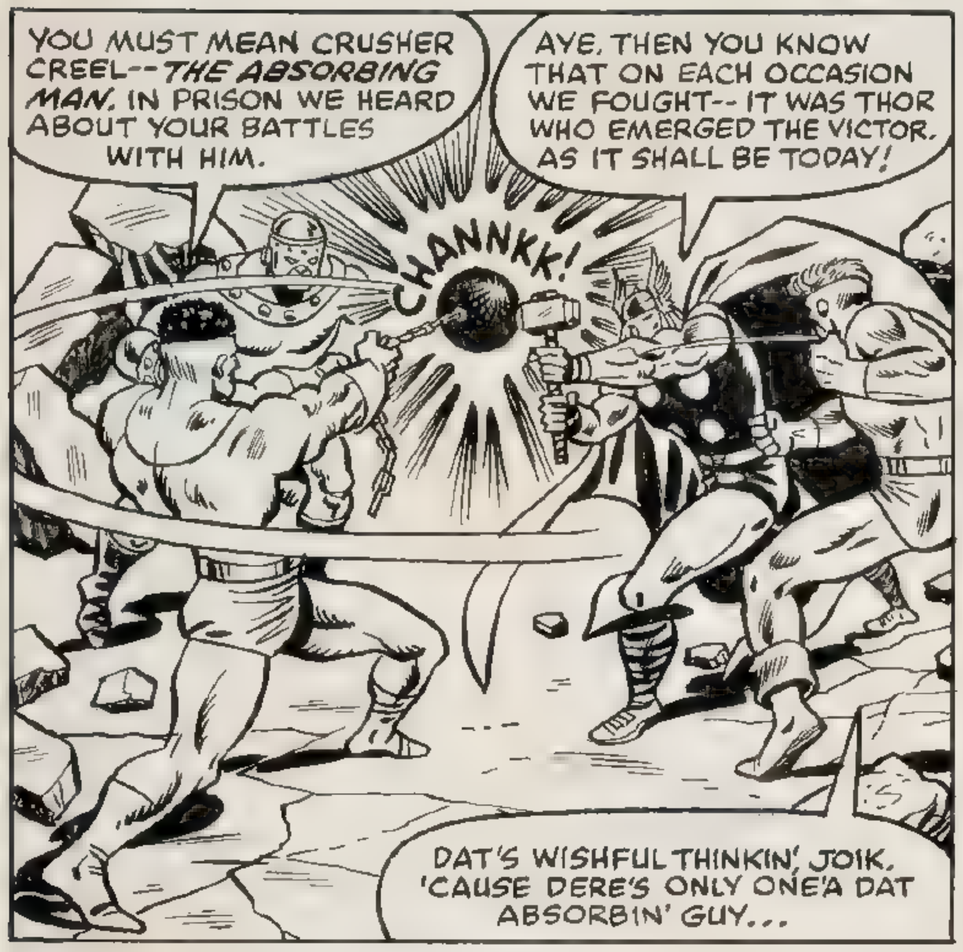
...BUT THAT THOU DIDST O'ERCOME THY FOES AND, IN THE END, SERVE THE CAUSE OF RIGHT.

AYE. AND YET, FAIR ONE, THOUGH THIS YEAR THE GREAT GAME ENDED AS IT SHOULD, IN A DRAW...

...WHAT OF NEXT YEAR? AND THE YEAR AFTER THAT? WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN?!

FIN...?

The Mighty Thor #304, page 13 original art
by Keith Pollard & Chic Stone


YOU MUST MEAN CRUSHER CREEL--*THE ABSORBING MAN.* IN PRISON WE HEARD ABOUT YOUR BATTLES WITH HIM.
AYE, THEN YOU KNOW THAT ON EACH OCCASION WE FOUGHT-- IT WAS THOR WHO EMERGED THE VICTOR, AS IT SHALL BE TODAY!
CHANNKK!
DAT'S WISHFUL THINKIN', JOIK. 'CAUSE DERE'S ONLY ONE'A DAT ABSORBIN' GUY...

I T'INK I'M GONNA SQUEEZE HIS BRAINS OUT THROUGH HIS EARS. WHAT DUH YOUSE T'INK?
THAT'S A NICE IDEA, PARDNUH. AND WHILE YOU'RE DOIN' THAT...
... AH'M GONNA GET ME A LOOK-SEE AT THIS FANCY-PANTS HAMMER. MIGHT BE GOOD FOAH SHOEIN' HORSES.

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #308 cover original art
by Keith Pollard

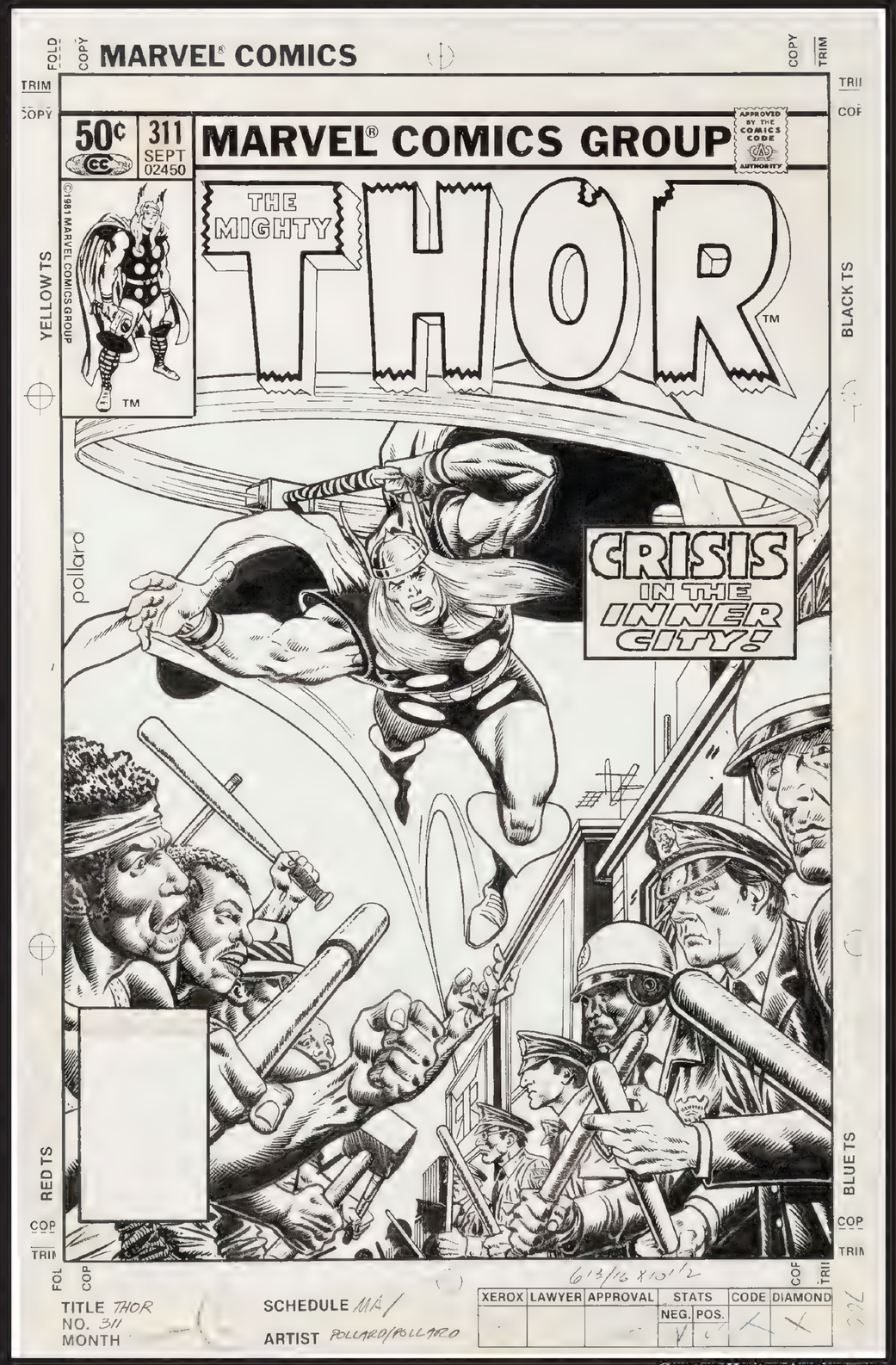
Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #310, page 9 original art
by Keith Pollard & Gene Day

310
10
YON FLAMES--!
--RISING FROM THE SAME STREET WHERE I EARLIER CONFRONTED THE YOUTHS!
AND THERE THEY BE E'EN NOW--
--RIOTING AMIDST THEIR FELLOW MORTALS!
WHAT MADNESS POSSESSES THEE?! YOU FACED THE CHOICE EARLIER, AND CHOSE RIGHTLY!
IT WAS YOUR CHOICE, CREEP--NOT OURS!
EXCELLENT! THE MYSTIC VAPORS REVEAL THAT THOR HAS BEEN PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE!
NOT ONLY HAVE I TIPPED THE SCALES BACK INTO BALANCE, BUT I AM NOW ON THE VERGE OF ACHIEVING MY TRUE GOAL--
--THE FINAL ELIMINATION OF THE THUNDER GOD HIMSELF!
AND SO... IT IS TIME TO BRING THE DRAMA TO ITS CONCLUDING ACT!
EH--?! THE ENTIRE STREET-- IT TREMBLES AS IF IN THE FIERCE GRIP OF AN EARTHQUAKE!

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #311 cover original art
by Keith Pollard



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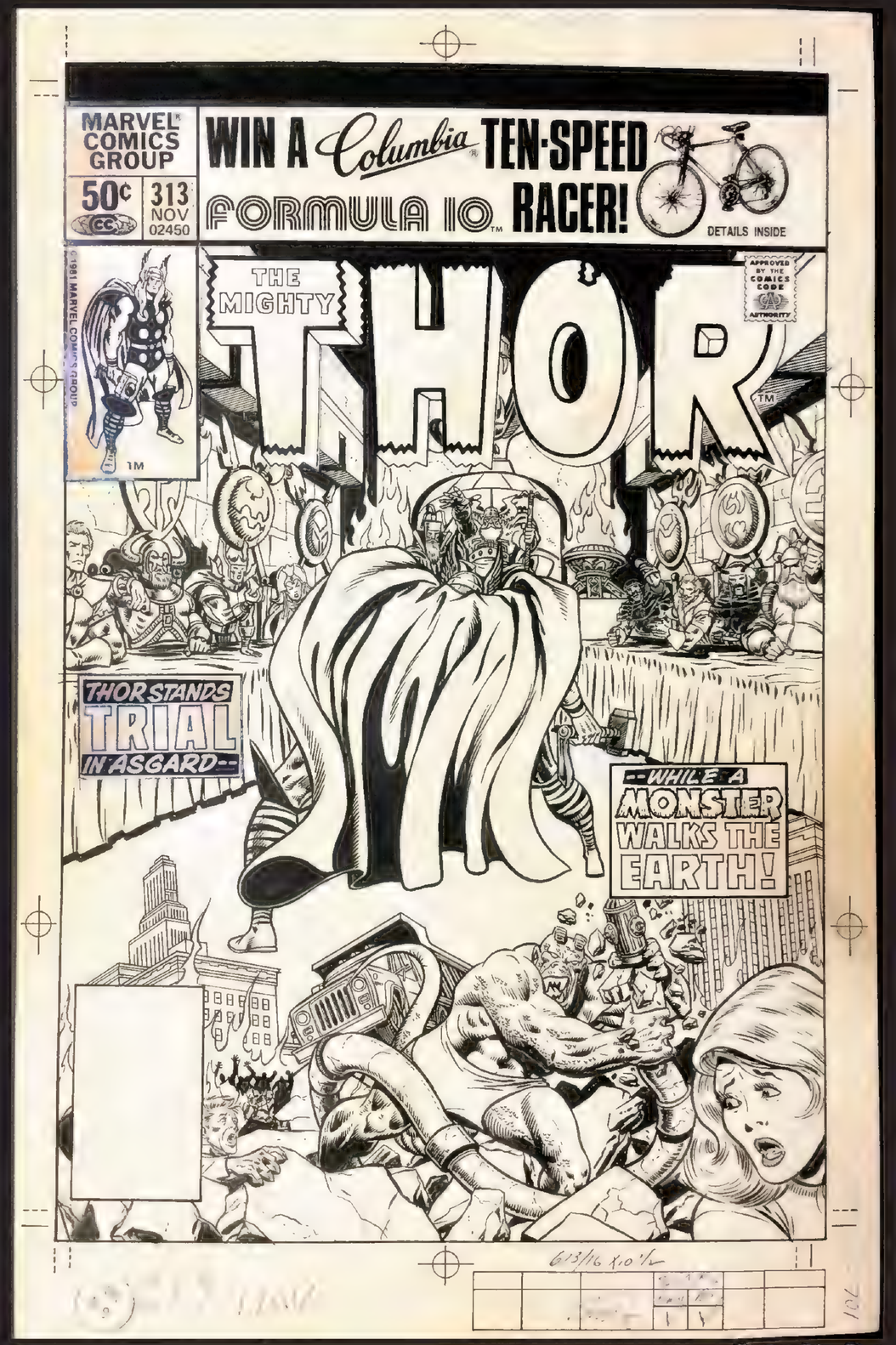
The Mighty Thor #312 cover original art
by Keith Pollard & Terry Austin

Courtesy Will Gabri-El

The Mighty Thor #313 unused cover original art
by Keith Pollard

Courtesy Peter Shapiro

The Mighty Thor #313 cover original art
by Keith Pollard



Courtesy Jaime Daez

The Mighty Thor #314, page 1 original art
by Keith Pollard & Dan Green

MIGHTY THOR
314
1
When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard...
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®
MOON DRAGON--MISTRESS OF MENTAL AND MARTIAL ARTS, TRAINED AND GROOMED BY MENTOR AND SENSIA ON SATURN'S HOLLOW MOON TITAN TO ASSUME THE MANTLE OF CELESTIAL MADONNA...UNTIL ANOTHER WAS CHOSEN IN HER PLACE.
DRAX THE DESTROYER--ONCE A NORMAL MAN WHO MET HIS DEATH IN A FIERY CAR CRASH AND WHOSE SOUL WAS SHAPED BY THE TITANS MENTOR AND KRONOS INTO A NEW KIND OF BEING WHOSE SOLE REASON FOR EXISTENCE WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEATH-GOD THANOS.
AND THOR--IMMORTAL LORD OF THUNDER, SON OF ODIN, SCION OF ASGARD, WHO HAS CHOSEN TO CAST HIS LOT AMONG THE MORTAL HUMANS OF EARTH.
NOW, THE FATES OF THESE THREE EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS ARE DESTINED TO INTERTWINE IN--
ACTS OF DESTRUCTION
DOUG MOENCH WRITER and KEITH POLLARD LAYOUT ARTIST / P. GREEN & P. MARCOS EMBELISHERS / JANICE CHIANG LETTERS / GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORS / JIM SALICRUP EDITOR / JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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BIOGRAPHIES

MARK GRUENWALD

Few can lay claim to the influence that Mark Gruenwald had on Marvel as an editor, writer and artist during the 1980s and '90s. Born in 1953 in Wisconsin, Gruenwald's love of comics manifested in a fanzine titled *Omniverse*, which led to writing articles for the DC-published fanzine *Amazing World of DC Comics*. In 1978, he was hired by Jim Shooter to serve as an assistant editor at Marvel. In addition, Gruenwald also scripted several titles. He was ongoing writer of *Spider-Woman* in 1978-79, he kicked off a long run co-scripting *Marvel Two-In-One* with the "Project Pegasus" arc, and he co-wrote a handful of stories in *What If?* and *Thor*. Early in his career, Gruenwald also penciled a number of titles, including issues of *Questprobe*, *Incredible Hulk* and *Marvel Team-Up*. His major art credit was drawing the 1983 *Hawkeye* miniseries, which he also scripted.

A well-known continuity hound and office jokester, Gruenwald gave T-shirts emblazoned with the catchphrase "Continuity or Bust" to his office peers. His deep love of the Marvel mythos didn't stop with T-shirts. As a writer, he delved deep into Marvel's past with his "Untold Tales of the Marvel Universe" backup stories in *What If?*, as well as the secret origin of the High Evolutionary in the 1989 "Evolutionary War" event. Gruenwald's biggest achievement in grappling with the encyclopedic history of Marvel was his development of *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, a series compiling the backgrounds of virtually every Marvel character. Eager fans devoured *OHOTMU*, and the series' success led to multiple sequels and updates that continue today.

Gruenwald's biggest accomplishment as a writer came with *Captain America*, a title which he wrote for an astonishing 137-issue run from 1985-1995. He also kicked off long runs on *Quasar* and the New Universe title *D.P. 7*. His critically acclaimed magnum opus, *Squadron Supreme*, a 12-issue miniseries, reestablished the alternate-reality Marvel team. When Tom DeFalco was named editor-in-chief in 1988, Gruenwald became his second-in-command with the title of executive editor. As an editor, he worked closely to mentor young writers, bringing an unforgettable sense of fun to the deadline slog. Tragically, Gruenwald passed away in 1996 due to an unknown heart ailment. In his will, he requested his ashes be mixed with ink used in the first printing of the *Squadron Supreme* trade paperback.

RALPH MACCHIO

Comics seemed to surround Ralph Macchio's life: His uncle was DC art legend Wayne Boring; his Cresskill, New Jersey, hometown doubled as the fictional comic book home of Ant-Man and the Wasp; and one of his youthful pastimes was writing letters to his favorite comic books. However, after graduating with a degree in English Literature, Macchio seemed poised to work for Macray, his family's moving company. An encounter with writer Don McGregor at a comic book convention pulled Macchio into Marvel's orbit. Regular visits to the Marvel office ensued, which in turn led to writing assignments for Marvel's in-house fanzine *F.O.O.M.*, and, by 1976, a position as an assistant editor.

Macchio wrote several titles early in his career, most notably *Thor* and *Marvel Two-In-One*, which he co-scripted with Mark Gruenwald, the latter title including the classic "Project Pegasus" storyline. He also wrote a six-issue *Solomon Kane* limited series and teamed with artist George Pérez for the Black Widow "Web of Intrigue" arc in *Marvel Fanfare*. But unlike many writers who jumped from editorial to freelance writing careers, Macchio decided he preferred the camaraderie of the Bullpen and the creative possibilities of involvement in every aspect of a book's production.

Major highlights of his distinguished editorial career include *Daredevil*—particularly Frank Miller's "Born Again," *The Man Without Fear*, and *Elektra Lives Again*—Walter Simonson's *Thor*, Doug Moench and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Moon Knight*, righting the Spider-Man franchise from the destabilizing "Clone Saga," the launch of the Ultimate Universe, and adaptations of Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* and *The Stand*. Macchio is just as well known for fostering new editors and countless interns, including future editor-in-chief Bob Harras and fan favorite artist Joe Madureira. He also kept a spirit of fun alive and well in the Marvel Bullpen through years of practical jokes. Macchio retired from Marvel in 2011 with an editorial tenure second only to Stan Lee.

DOUG MOENCH

A prolific writer over the last four decades, Doug Moench has made indelible contributions to Marvel and DC characters as well as developing his own creator-owned properties. After starting his career as a film reviewer for the Chicago *Sun-Times*, by 1971 he was ready to make his way into comics. Like many other writers of the time, he broke in with a story for Warren horror mag *Eerie*, after which he quickly found a home at Marvel. His initial efforts were focused on Marvel's black-and-white magazine line, including *Rampaging Hulk*, *Planet of the Apes* and *Tales of the Zombie*.

Moench's penchant for writing horror tales led to a long tenure on *Werewolf By Night*, near the end of which he introduced the brooding anti-hero Moon Knight. At around the same time, he and Rich Buckler launched Deathlok in the pages of *Astonishing Tales*. His other major achievement in the '70s was his tenure on *Master of Kung Fu*, a 10-year long saga praised by critics as a high-water mark of that era's comic storytelling.

In the midst of his work on mainline Marvel titles, he and longtime art partner Paul Gulacy developed *Six For Sirius*, a creator-owned sci-fi series on Marvel's Epic imprint; its success spawned a sequel, *Six For Sirius II*. He also co-created and

wrote *Aztec Ace*, a popular indie title published by Eclipse.

By the mid-'80s, Moench had moved to DC Comics, where he took firm control of the Batman franchise, writing both *Batman* and *Detective Comics* for four years. Other DC highlights included *Mister Miracle*, *The Wanderers*, *Omega Men* and several highly regarded *Elseworlds* graphic novels. In the '90s, he returned to Batman for a seven-year run, after which he took on *Catwoman*. His most recent credit for Marvel was *Master of Kung Fu: Hellfire Apocalypse*, a 2003 limited series that reunited him with longtime art partner and *MOKF* alum Gulacy.

KEITH POLLARD

One of its most high-profile artists in the late '70s and early '80s, Keith Pollard's tenure at Marvel was notable for his sleek, refined renderings of the company's most iconic characters. He broke in at Marvel in 1974, drawing such characters as Deathlok in *Astonishing Tales*, Shang-Chi in *Master of Kung Fu*, and the super-hero action of *Black Goliath*, *Ms. Marvel*, and Black Panther in *Jungle Action*. After a stint on the black-and-white *Rampaging Hulk* magazine, Pollard was ushered into the starting lineup of creators on three of Marvel's flagship titles.

Starting in 1978, Pollard provided breakdown art on *Fantastic Four* for the legendary Joe Sinnott to finish. Soon after landing his *FF* gig, he began penciling *The Amazing Spider-Man* and then took the reins from "Big" John Buscema on *Thor*, starting a run that would encompass the epic "Eternals Saga" storyline. All in all, Pollard's hand guided the visuals of these three prime Marvel titles simultaneously, and his tenures on each book are memorable additions to each title's legacy.

In the early '80s, Pollard took on a new stable of heroes at DC, drawing several issues of *Green Lantern* and launching *The Vigilante* with writer Marv Wolfman. He returned to regular series work at Marvel in 1989, once again drawing *Fantastic Four*. By 1995, Pollard retired from comics, although he is currently appearing at conventions and doing commissioned art for his fans.

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It is hard to remember a time when the word "mutant" didn't correspond with the largest and most ardently followed franchise in comics, but in the mid-'70s the X-Men were naught but a forgotten team of misfits. Chris Claremont and his collaborators took this moribund property and issue by issue transformed it into a phenomenon now known the world over.

Claremont began his career in comics in the early '70s pitching in on issues of *Avengers*, *Daredevil* and *Incredible Hulk*, while also delivering several text stories to Marvel's black-and-white magazines. His first regular writing gig was *War Is Hell*, a "weird war" title that came to a close just as his run on *X-Men* and *Iron Fist* began. *Iron Fist*, which rolled out of the pages of *Marvel Premiere*, was done in concert with artist John Byrne, forming a key partnership that would pay big dividends later. Other high-profile projects from Claremont's first full decade in comics included *Marvel Preview*'s Starlord, *Ms. Marvel*, *Marvel Team-Up* (again with Byrne) and *John Carter: Warlord of Mars*.

But it was in the pages of *X-Men* where Claremont would change comics history. In tandem with artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Claremont helped build a cornerstone franchise for Marvel. After writer Len Wein launched the newly updated series in 1975 with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, Claremont was tasked with guiding the new adventures of the mutant misfits, and he did so by crafting layered stories that balanced crisp dialogue with high-octane action. Claremont placed a premium on characterization, a lofty goal in a team book with many players, but he did so deftly enough to spin a wide-ranging tapestry of characters, each of whom became fan favorites.

Leading breathless fans down the path of classics including "The Dark Phoenix Saga," "Days of Future Past," and *God Loves, Man Kills*, he helped build such an intense loyalty that it only made sense to spin-off the X-Men's success into new books. The first such spin-off was *The New Mutants*. Later in the decade, Claremont launched *Excalibur* with Alan Davis and established a regular series for Wolverine with John Buscema.

In 1990, he launched a new sister title for the main team of mutants with Jim Lee; *X-Men* #1 premiered to numbers that made it the highest-selling comic ever. After a long break from the company, Claremont returned to Marvel in 2000, and over the next ten years wrote the novelization of Bryan Singer's X-Men film, took on the Fantastic Four, and charted the adventures of Marvel's mutants across a variety of titles. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame with its 2015 class.

ALAN KUPPERBERG

Alan Kupperberg's experience with all facets of writing, art, advertising and design helped make him a "jack of all trades" in comics, with credits as a writer, penciler, inker and letterer. He began his career in the early 1970s in DC Comics' production department and Neal Adams and Dick Giordano's Continuity Associates studio. Kupperberg's first art credit was a single-page story in *Young Romance* #183 (June 1972). In 1974, he moved to Atlas/Seaboard where he served as a letterer, colorist, editor and production manager. After Atlas/Seaboard's demise, Kupperberg started working at Marvel, including penciling an adaptation of Robert Bloch's "The Living Dead" in *Vampire Tales* #5. He was a frequent contributor to *Crazy Magazine*, which often featured his scripts for the "Obnoxio the Clown Fun Pages." Clowns seemed to be a preoccupation for Kupperberg, as he would illustrate Frenchy the Evil Clown in *National Lampoon*, and would write, draw and letter the 1983 *Obnoxio vs. the X-Men* one-shot. Kupperberg racked up an impressive amount of fill-in and pinch-hit jobs on Marvel titles like *Captain America*, *Defenders*, *Doctor Strange* and *Avengers*, plus short runs on *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Marvel Two-In-One*, *Thor* and *Spitfire and the Troubleshooters*. He also drew several issues of *What If?* and the four-issue miniseries *Iceman*, and is perhaps best known for long runs on *Invaders* and DC's *Blue Devil*. Kupperberg also served as illustrator of the syndicated comic strips *Hulk*, *Howard the Duck*, and *Little Orphan Annie*. Kupperberg passed away in 2015.

RICK LEONARDI

As soon as Rick Leonardi graduated from Dartmouth College in 1979, he sent Marvel and DC a self-written and -drawn comic book that spoke to his artistic potential. Marvel wrote back, encouraging him to take a job with them. In his first years in comics, Leonardi eased himself into the business with a handful of stories in *Thor* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man*. After proving himself, he landed a pair of higher-profile gigs with writer Bill Mantlo on the 1982 miniseries *The Vision and the Scarlet Witch* and *Cloak and Dagger*. After penciling issues of *The Amazing Spider-Man*—and being a part of the development of Spider-Man's new black costume with Mike Zeck—Leonardi reunited with Mantlo to launch an ongoing *Cloak and Dagger* series in 1985. He followed that up with Marvel's top-selling X-titles, drawing a Colossus serial in *Marvel Comics Presents* and several issues of *The Uncanny X-Men* and *The New Mutants*. In 1992, Leonardi and Peter David created Miguel O'Hara in *Spider-Man 2099*, a series Leonardi would draw for most of the first 25 issues of its run. In the late '90s, Leonardi drew the five-issue series *Painkiller Jane* for Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's Event Comics, and in the 2000s, he would head to DC for stints with *Batgirl*, *Vigilante* and *Nightwing*. A longtime fan of Batman, Leonardi's most recent project is the ongoing series *Batman Beyond*.

BILL MANTLO

From the mid-'70s through the late-'80s, Bill Mantlo established himself as one of the most dedicated writers in the comics industry, writing hundreds of stories across dozens of titles, primarily for Marvel Comics.

Mantlo broke into comics as a colorist, but it wasn't long before he was given a crack at writing a fill-in story, a "Sons of the Tiger" story in the black-and-white *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* magazine, and his true comics talent began to emerge. The quality of his work led to his installation as that book's regular writer, a tenure that included the notable achievement of introducing comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger.

After achieving notoriety within the Marvel offices as a guy who could knock out credible fill-in scripts at a moment's notice, Mantlo was given more regular work. One early highlight was his 20-issue tenure on *Iron Man* that began the Golden Avenger's return to prominence. As one might expect from someone with such a volume of work, Mantlo was game to take on projects others dismissed, and he did it with an unfeigned aplomb that elevated the work.

It was on two licensed titles that Mantlo built his legacy. Inspired by a toy given to his son at Christmas, Mantlo lobbied Marvel to adapt Micronauts into an ongoing series. The award-winning epic he spun with artistic luminaries like Michael Golden and Pat Broderick is still highly revered by comics fandom as is his even longer run on *Rom*, wherein he developed a universe filled with Spaceknights, Dire Wraith monsters and outer space intrigue. Other notable credits in Mantlo's career include *Incredible Hulk*, *Alpha Flight* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*.

Just as Mantlo had begun a new career as a public defender with the New York City Legal Aid Society, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and went into a weeks-long coma from severe head trauma. He has since been under constant medical care. The comics community has led multiple fundraisers to aid in the continuing care of a talented writer who is missed by his many fans.

LUKE McDONNELL

Luke McDonnell broke into comics in 1981 at Marvel, drawing three issues of *Star Trek* as well as issues of *Iron Man*, *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*. In 1982, he became the series regular artist on *Iron Man*. His three-year tenure included the historic passing of the mantle of Iron Man from Tony Stark to James "Rhodey" Rhodes. McDonnell also penciled issues of *Daredevil*, *Star Wars* and *The New Defenders* before departing Marvel for DC in 1985. There, he penciled the final sixteen issues of the Detroit-era *Justice League of America*. He went straight from that to the biggest milestone in his career: the creation of *Suicide Squad* with writer John Ostrander. McDonnell would draw the first 24 issues of the series featuring a team of super villains working for international law enforcement; he returned a year later for another eight-issue run. During his time on *Suicide Squad*, McDonnell also penciled a spin-off miniseries starring Deadshot and drew several issues of Jim Starlin's *Dreadstar* at First Comics, after which he launched a thirteen-issue run of DC's adaptation of Lee Falk's newspaper comic hero the Phantom. His 1990s work was mostly for DC, though he did draw a pair of *What If?* stories at Marvel. In 2012, McDonnell returned to comics as a colorist for IDW's *Popeye*.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

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As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over America, a new storytelling medium was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States. At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary creators as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These trailblazing talents birthed a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

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GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the Golden Age retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, the Atlas Era had it all!

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ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
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ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

In August 1961, change hit newsstands: *The Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. They were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves — and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different — the beginning of the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

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THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN VOLS. 1-13
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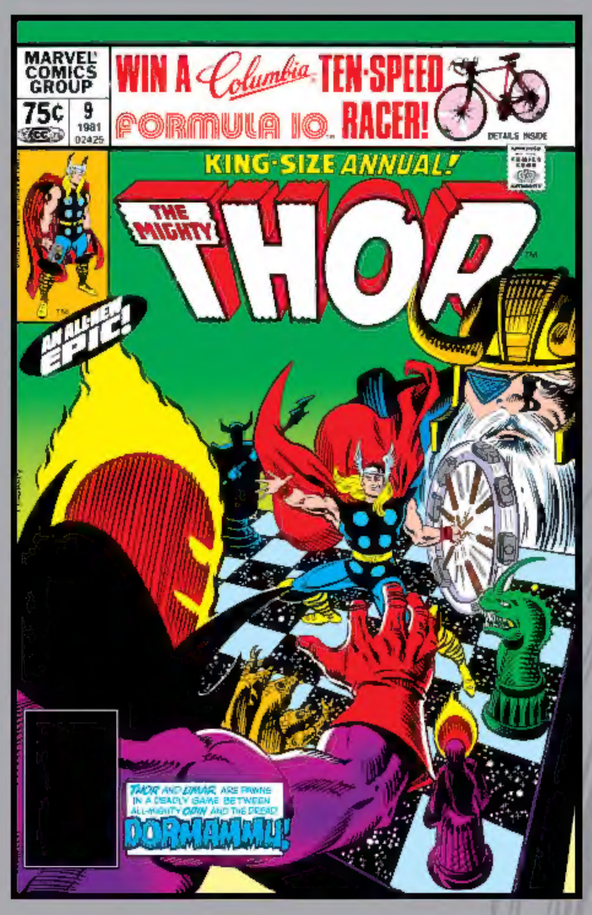
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